Motivating Students to Achieve in a Vocational Services Sector Programme Within Further Education

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Abstract

This thesis explores learning motivation in a vocational further education setting, and investigates whether and why learners may not be achieving as highly as expected. The purpose of this study was to explore a learner's transition into further education (FE) and the impact of their past educational and life experiences on their motivation to learn. A form of life course research was used to explore why some learners fail to reach their minimum expected grade profiles, as indicated by value added data, and appear to leave further education without achieving as highly as expected. A detailed study of what goes on in practice at programme level to enhance the progress made by the learner provides a rounded study of learning motivation.

This study uses a qualitative case study methodology and a form of life course research. A desk based interrogation of policy literature and the construction of policy across macro (national), meso and micro levels sets the context of study. Semi-structured interviews with ten BTEC National Extended Public Services students were used to form partial life stories that were analysed using Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of 'capital', and 'field'. Classroom observations of teaching and learning practices explore what is going on in practice.

The findings detail a wide ranging number of factors that can attribute to learning motivation. These include 'emotional factors' such as the influence of peers, parents and teachers, the approach and personality of the teacher, and critical incidents at various points in a learner's education. In addition, there are 'cultural factors' such as religion, perception of the value of qualifications, assessment preferences, and cultures associated with FE. Whilst the data highlighted sub-themes pertinent to the broader emotional and cultural factors that may impact learner motivation, these findings also present the diverse and individualistic nature of learning and learner motivation.

The discussion illustrates the multifaceted and complex nature of learning motivation and highlights the importance of social structure in the development and maintenance of learning cultures. More specifically, the discussion highlights the importance of significant others and the reciprocal nature of emotional investment in education.

A range of conceptual models are introduced to help teachers and managers understand the complex and multifaceted nature of learning motivation providing useful tools for curriculum design and intervention. These models can help teachers and managers to understand the key capital transactions and transubstantiations between learners, parents, teachers, and peers from a Bourdeusian perspective thus understanding the value of various capitals (namely cultural and emotional) and how they interact within the network of fields that are at play at the educational site.

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Chapter One
'What is this study all about?'

Introduction: This study explores learning motivation in vocational further education (FE) students, with particular emphasis on services sector provision cohorts, and investigates whether and why these learners may not be achieving as highly as expected. The purpose of this study is to explore a learner's transition into FE and the impact of past educational and life experiences on learning motivation. Policy analysis sets the context of this study within the FE sector. A form of life course research is used to explore why some learners fail to reach their minimum expected grade profiles (based on value added data) and leave FE without achieving as highly as expected. A detailed study of what goes on in practice at programme level to improve outcomes provides a rounded study of learning motivation.

This chapter begins with an overview of the background and context that frames the study. Following this is an insight into existing research in this area of study, the problem statement, the statement of purpose, and accompanying research questions. Also included in this chapter is an outline of my perspective, positionality, and assumptions as a researcher. The chapter then moves to a discussion of the rationale and significance of this research study and definitions of some of the key terminology used before concluding with a sub-chapter (1.1) that discusses in detail the college story in relation to educational policy and presents an analytical view of the macro influences on the learning site and the measures used by external agencies to determine the level of progress made by learners.

Background and Context: As national benchmarks for achievement in post compulsory education continue to rise (Learning and Skills Council, 2010), key performance indicators[1] (KPI) suggest that many level 3 post 16 students are not achieving as highly as expected whilst studying on courses within the FE sector. The trend of poor results against these KPI (in particular the value added score) is particularly prominent within vocational programmes such as BTEC[2]

(Business and Technology Education Council) National Award / Certificate / Diplomas[3] (later changed to Extended and Subsidiary Diplomas) in Public Services. It is my intention to investigate learning motivation within the FE vocational sector with specific emphasis (a case study) on why public services students may not achieve as highly as expected. Is this a result of FE institutions preoccupation with success rates based on retention and achievement? Do students lack the motivation to aspire beyond their minimum expected grade[4] (MEG)? Personal experiences and involvement within the FE environment led me to believe that both these factors contributed to a student's final grade outcome.

Existing Research in this Area: There are many studies that contribute to the body of knowledge in the broad field of learning motivation and achievement. A selection of these studies has been grouped together under *learner voice[5]*, *assessment*, *policy* and *psychological* themes.

Learner voice - Bloomer and Hodkinson (1999) completed a study that captured the 'learner voice' providing an insight into learning motivation from the learners' perspective. Ward and Edward's (2002) study also explored the learner voice providing further insight into learning motivation. Both these studies are pertinent to my research as they capture the learners' perspective on motivation and provide an insight into what 'motivation' means to the learner and what 'motivates' them to learn. Alvarado and López' (2012) study captures the learner voice with regards to the 'peer effect' on a learner's decision making process when applying for college courses. Motivation within the context of social and emotional capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Reay, 2000; Zembylas, 2007; and Hutchison, 2012) are highly pertinent to this study.

Assessment –Bowring's (1994) study into adult learning and records of achievement provided some insight into learning motivation. Cooke *et al* (1996) and Cox (2002) also studied adult education with particular focus around students' attitude and response to assessment and accreditation. These studies present an interesting view of learning motivation within the context of

assessment. Torrance and Coultas' (2004) literature review provides an additional perspective of learning motivation and assessment. Ecclestone and Prior's (2003) study into learning and assessment 'careers' provides an interesting insight into the impact of assessment systems on learning and learner motivation through life course. Harlen and Crick's (2003) paper on assessment in education looked specifically at testing and its impact on learning motivation. These studies reinforce some of my own foreshadowed problems that I have explored within my research, particularly the notion that learners are becoming 'goal oriented', that is, valuing the certificate awarded at the end of an educational course more than the knowledge or expertise gained.

Policy - Ecclestone's (2001, 2002a, 2002b) studies are extremely pertinent to this study due to the similarities in the research design, particularly her (2002a) enquiry into the politics and practice of formative assessment[6]. The Ofsted Common Inspection Framework (2012), Learner Achievement Tracker (LAT) Handbook released by the Young People's Learning Agency (2010), Wolf's (2011) Review of Vocational Education and, more recently, the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL) report (2013) are important papers that have supported the policy strand of this study.

Psychological - Skinner and Belmont's (1993) paper on motivation in the classroom outlines the importance of teacher behaviour in motivating learners. Tamkin and Hillage (1997) completed a study into individual commitment to learning with particular emphasis on learner motivation and rewards. Smith and Spurling (1999, 2001) explored learner motivation for lifelong learning. Enzle *et al*, (1996) investigated intrinsic motivation effects providing an insight into learner motivation from a psychological perspective. LSDA[7] (Learning and Skills Development Agency) reports written by Howard (2001) and Martinez (2001) tackle learning motivation from a number of perspectives, particularly with regards to improving student retention[8] and achievement. Martinez and Munday's (1998) paper investigates student retention and tackles learning motivation within their study. Williams and DeSteno's (2008) study explores the role of 'pride' in motivating learners.

Much of the existing research in this field is around learning motivation and the policy and practice of assessment. There is little research into learning motivation within the context of FE vocational study, particularly services sector cohorts. Along with the identified problem (outlined below), the lack of published literature surrounding this specific area of study suggests that research into this has the potential to make a contribution to this particular field (learning motivation and achievement in vocational FE settings).

Foreshadowed Problems: From a constructivist perspective it can be suggested that research will always be influenced by or begin with a set of problems or issues or even 'tentative assumptions'. These problems may become apparent through the researcher's personal experiences, discussions with colleagues and/or significant others, and the literature and research completed to date. Malinowski (1922) refers to these as 'foreshadowed problems', he states;

> "Good training in theory, and acquaintance with its latest results, is not identical with being burdened with 'preconceived ideas'. If a man sets out on an expedition, determined to prove certain hypotheses, if he is incapable of changing his views constantly and casting them off ungrudgingly under the pressure of evidence, needless to say his work will be worthless. The more problems he brings with him into the field, the more he is in the habit of moulding his theories according to facts, and of seeing facts in their bearing upon theory, the better he is equipped for the work. Preconceived ideas are pernicious in any scientific work, but foreshadowed problems are the main endowment of the scientific thinker, and these problems are first revealed to the observer by his theoretical studies."

(p.8-9)

Based on personal experience, staff and student feedback and the value added measure data that is evident in recent years; the following foreshadowed problems relate to this study.

Firstly, teaching and lecturing staff at the college site believe that learners are arriving at college with 'far more personal issues and needs' than in previous years and that the teaching role is becoming increasingly complex. Supported by

Ecclestone's (2004) paper 'Learning or therapy? The demoralization of education', this foreshadowed problem is based on staffroom discussion, INSET (in-service training) sessions that focus on tutoring and the holistic learner, and, an increased emphasis on widening participation to recruit learners from the most deprived wards in the local area and support these learners to achieve.

Secondly, learners starting vocational programmes of study at the college site believe that they are on a sub-standard programme of study when compared to those starting A-levels[9] that are still seen as the gold standard (Edexcel, 2015). This statement is based on the fact that many of the learners studying vocational programmes such as BTEC National Diploma would have failed to gain a place at the A-level centre. The A-level provision at the college site is delivered within the new 'state of the art' campus a building purpose built for A-level and higher education provision. Many of the students enrolling onto a vocational programme such as the BTEC National Diploma in Public Services (BNDPS) have historically been sent across from the A-level centre as they did not meet the strict entry criteria or pass the interview process. It can be assumed that these learners feel they are on a 'lesser' programme of study and this feeling may well permeate through the cohort. This feeling may have also been reinforced at initial interview stage where staff may have suggested a 'more appropriate course of study' based on their review of a student's current expected grades and recent reports. The foreshadowed problem here is the impact all of these points may have on learning motivation (Preston, 2003).

Another foreshadowed problem is the assumption amongst teachers and lecturers that students on vocational programmes such as a BNDPS are less likely to aspire to go to university. Their assumption is based on the progression data from the sports and public services department self-assessment report (2010) that has shown that less than 15% of level 3 public services students progress to a degree level programme. The assumption is reinforced through the experience of personal tutors during their 1-1 discussions with tutees.

In contrast, another foreshadowed problem, is the assumption, that all learners who enrol onto a further education vocational programme do so because they want to. They have career ambitions, and have made the decision to start post compulsory education based on information advice and guidance (IAG). This assumption is based on the premise that further education is non-compulsory (learners must opt in[10]). All applicants that are successfully awarded a place on a programme of study at the college site have gone through the standard interview procedure where IAG is given allowing the student to make an informed decision on the suitability of starting a programme of study.

Another foreshadowed problem is the limitations of the value added measure and method for determining the amount of progress made by a learner. Personal experience of using the value added measure, and discussions with Faculty staff who concur that the system used by the YPLA[11], Ofsted[12], and the college, does not consider the learner's life history, the levels of support offered to or taken up by the learner throughout their education to date, and how their life experiences have impacted on their learning motivation. The context of policy drivers and the value added measure is discussed in detail in sub-section 1.1 of this chapter.

The final assumption that was outlined at the outset of the study is that learners on vocational programmes of study that are not assessed through formal examinations are 'goal outcome oriented', that is, wanting the diploma or certificate and not necessarily the knowledge. This assumption is based, again, on the perceptions of personal tutors and lecturing staff.

Problem: Through consideration of the foreshadowed problems it is evident that the learning motivation and achievement issue embraces: 1) target-setting around qualification outcomes as a measure of individual and institutional success. 2) The impact of a learner's past educational and life experiences on their learning motivation. 3) How institutions' and individuals' practice is being shaped by policies. 4) How a learner's life history connects to learning motivation. In recent years value added data for vocational programmes (Service Sector courses such as BNDPS) at the college site has indicated poor results with

many learners achieving outcomes below their minimum expectation based on their GCSE[13] points scores on arrival to the college (see Chapter One endnotes). It appears that some learners within post-compulsory education, particularly those on vocational courses are perceived to have a lack of motivation to achieve as highly as expected.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore student motivation within the FE vocational sector with specific emphasis on why some students do not achieve as highly as expected. The information gathered may be used to formulate appropriate strategies and interventions that can be implemented in order to improve learning motivation and resultant value added measure scores within vocational programmes at institutional level.

Research Questions: In order to 'shed light' on the problem the following research questions were developed in relation to the initial purpose and focus of this research project and consideration of the foreshadowed problems:

1. What is the policy context; value added policy in initial Post Compulsory Education and Training and its link (if at all) to learner motivation?

2. What (if any) are the differences in policy statement intentions (surrounding value added and motivation) and policy enactments, the implementation of policy at 'ground level'?

3. Why do learners within post-compulsory education studying vocational courses at the college site have a (perceived) lack of motivation to fulfil their potential within FE (as indicated through low value added scores)?

4. Can Bourdieu's concepts of '*habitus*' and 'cultural fields' be used as theoretical and conceptual tools to frame the learners' life courses and help explain their motivation and orientation to learning?

5. What can be learned about learning motivation through completing this study?

However, as my research progressed, my initial research questions were prioritised, reprioritised and adapted as particular themes came to prominence, requiring greater space within this thesis and others were removed from the study or given a lower priority and space. My initial research plan had a greater

focus on value added and its impact on learning motivation. However, as the data collection process ensued it became evident that regular access to participants throughout the whole of the academic year was not possible. Therefore the data set did not provide adequate empirical evidence to investigate value added across the period of students' engagement with the programme. The five research questions were adapted and reduced to three to allow for more of a focus on the learners' transition into further education:

1. Why do learners within post-compulsory education[14] studying vocational courses at Mid-town College (pseudonym used) have a perceived lack of motivation to achieve the level of progress expected as indicated through low value added scores?

2. Can Bourdieu's concepts, specifically 'capital', 'field' and '*habitus*' be used as theoretical and conceptual tools to understand the learners' life courses and help explain their motivation and orientation to learning?

3. What can be learned (teachers, managers, policy makers) about learning motivation through completing this study?

Supporting Questions: In addition to the above research questions a number of 'supporting questions' were explored within this study. The supporting questions within this study emerged through consideration of the foreshadowed problems, early literature research, and my personal understanding of the FE sector. Therefore, the supporting questions act as 'way markers' or 'stepping stones' to finding the truth of the bigger research questions at the centre of this thesis. The supporting questions are therefore different to the primary research questions in that they support the research process through providing a platform for assumptions and problems to be explored and tested.

Supporting Questions (*policy*)

1. What national and local policy drivers influence learning motivation within Mid-town College, and in what way?

2. How is educational policy interpreted and enacted by teaching staff?

Supporting Questions (*student motivation*)

3. What factors (past and present) do participants perceive to have affected their progress in studying in FE?

4. What did/do participants perceive to be their main motivators for completing past and present study?

5. What did participants perceive to be the key differences between compulsory and post compulsory education and how these differences may have accounted for their differing levels of achievement in FE?

The supporting questions within the policy category are discussed in detail in subsection 1.1 of this chapter and provide the broader context of the value added measure issue needed to understand the literature review, findings, analysis and synthesis chapters that follow.

Research Design Overview: This study has three strands, the first interrogates macro level education policy and how it is interpreted and implemented at meso and micro levels. This study will also analyse policy discourses within the FE sector in order to set in context the foreshadowed problems discussed earlier in this chapter. The second strand of study being an analysis of learners' life stories and how their experiences to date may impact their motivation to learn. The third strand of this study examines what is going on in practice within classroom sessions to improve value added outcomes. The first strand of this study was completed at the outset in order to set the context for the thesis. The second and third strands of this study were explored reciprocally and in isolation allowing appropriate claims to be made regarding each whilst still appreciating the links between them and to the overarching exploration of learning motivation in tackling the perceived problem.

Strand 1 - The first strand of this study uses policy analysis, a desk based interrogation of educational policy literature to examine the construction, interpretation and re-interpretation of key education drivers across macro (national), meso and micro levels.

Stand 2 - Semi-structured interviews with ten (later reduced to nine) public services students from a single BTEC National Diploma cohort were used as the primary method of data collection for the second strand of study. The data collected from a number of interviews with each participant were used to create partial life stories. These were analysed using Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of 'capital', '*habitus*' and 'field' using a form of life course research.

Strand 3 - Classroom observations of teaching and learning practice followed by focus groups with the learners forms the third strand of study into what is going on in practice.

These forms of data gathering enables claims to be made regarding the way policy may or may not shape practice or indeed 'unearth' other points of interest in relation to learning motivation within this field of study.

My Personal Involvement in FE and Mid-town College

I have worked within FE for twelve years. The last eight years have been at Mid-town College where promotion to the post of Curriculum Manager and then Head of Faculty has given me a greater insight into the recording and use of key performance data amongst other systems and policies that set the strategic and operational direction of the organisation. Mid-town College has also been through two full Ofsted inspections and an annual monitoring visit (AMV) during my employment, the first in January 2008 (full inspection) and later October 2010 (AMV), and more recently December 2013 (full inspection) where the importance of progress data in terms of determining the effectiveness and resultant grade of a college (colleges are graded on the outcome of an Ofsted inspection, 1 equating to 'Outstanding', 2 'Good', 3 'Requires Improvement' and 4

'Inadequate') were emphasised by HMIs (Her Majesty's Inspectors) in their final reports.

As Mid-town College prepares for its next Ofsted inspection with a goal of being graded 1 'Outstanding' in all key areas of the final report, the importance of improving value added data is becoming a corporate priority[15]. This corporate focus, combined with my passion as a teacher and manager to inspire and motivate the young adults that attend Mid-town College to avoid underachievement has led me to undertake this research. The synergy (or lack of) between management goals (grade 1 in the next Ofsted inspection[15] and ensuring financial robustness in a time of severe cuts in educational funding) and, teacher passion and education for the sake of education (that is to provide opportunity for individuals to develop to become more rounded, knowledgeable and skilful), will be explored in order to attempt to understand how 'top-down' initiatives are interpreted and implemented at 'ground level' in the classroom and whether or not there is any conflict here.

Researcher 'positionality' through life story: 'I am who I am because of everything!'

As it is impossible to take the researcher out of any study (Wellington *et al*, 2005) it is imperative that my own 'positionality' within research is defined. What is my social position, unique perspective on my research question, and how do the answers to these aforementioned questions help frame my study? The following life history, as brief as it is represented here, may help the reader understand the perspective from which this study is written. I will refer later to Bourdieu's key influential concepts in an attempt to make sense of it all.

Born in the small Welsh town of Pontypool in South-East Wales and into a white Welsh working class family. Family life was typical of a working class Welsh 'nuclear' family with a Father, a carpenter by trade, who worked long hours and was the sole provider of income and a Mother who was a hard working house wife who ran the household with military precision. It was an upbringing that would appear 'old fashioned' in today's social context where the household was

built not on academic knowledge, ambition or material possessions but through strong family morals and central [central to the family's core values] beliefs in what is right or wrong. In fact with regards to education I was seen as the 'black sheep' of the family for wanting to study beyond compulsory education. Further and higher education was not valued by my immediate or wider family and both parents and younger sister left education immediately after school to seek employment.

The seemingly low value of education was echoed throughout the local community where very few aspired to continue their education at the local FE College [Pontypool College – later renamed Gwent Tertiary College and then to Coleg Gwent]. The area where I grew up had a close community feel where family and friends lived in the same street and an open door policy meant that it was acceptable to walk into a neighbour's house without invitation. The community functioned around itself and within a bubble. My Father left this bubble to go to work every morning though he usually left before I got up for school and returned late to a hot dinner waiting for him on the table as he entered the house.   This to me was the norm, a perspective on family life that was reinforced many times through witnessing the similar household cultures of friends and wider family.

Pre-school formal education did not exist for me or indeed any of my friends who lived on the same street. I started primary education at Pontnewynydd Primary School in 1983 aged 4. At age 11, I started secondary education in Trevethin Comprehensive School where I completed 10 GCSE subjects. It was around this time that I started to discover the pleasures of sport. I enjoyed the physical testing of the body and seeing results from various training interventions. It was during these years that I learned one of my life lessons, input is equal to output or as my Father would say 'you get out of life what you put in!' My educational journey continued into FE where I attended Pontypool College and studied full time for a BTEC National Diploma in Sports Science. I did not fully understand what the qualification was at the time as it was the launch year of BTEC qualifications at Pontypool College, then again, I did not fully understand what A-

levels were either! All I knew was that if I wanted to go to college I had to have 5 GCSEs at 'C' grade or above including Maths, English and Science. The entry criteria for A-levels and BTEC National Diplomas was the same and as I loved sports it appeared to be a 'win win' situation, so I enrolled. During the two years I spent at college I started to think about teaching as a possible career. The teachers who taught on the sport programme at college really appeared to enjoy their jobs and I could see myself in a similar role.

It was in the closing weeks of the BTEC National Diploma Programme that I made one of the biggest decisions of my life. I had been accepted on the university course of my choice and had my teaching career mapped out. I am still not sure why I had the unstoppable urge to do something radical, the urge to test myself physically. I left college gaining a distinction profile on the BTEC programme and a few weeks later after a lot of research I found myself in the Armed Forces Careers Advice Centre in Cardiff. I had read about the Royal Marines Commandos in various literature and felt so excited about the challenge of completing the 'world's most gruelling military training' that I simply could not resist. After initial discussions with careers advisors (including difficult ones with parents) I completed the entry tests, potential recruit's course and within a few months was standing to attention with my heels together at the Lympstone Commando Training Centre about to start 32 weeks of hell.

I started the 32 weeks commando training in February 1998, passing out for duty in November 1998. During my time served with the Royal Marines I lived in various locations across the country (including Arbroath Scotland, Lympstone Exeter, Plymouth and Taunton) and served on operational tours in Kosovo and Afghanistan. I also completed training exercises in various locales for jungle (Belize), arctic (Pristina), desert (Oman) and mountain (Scotland) warfare and survival. It was during my time travelling within the forces that I developed an appreciation for different cultures and societies, which in turn fuelled my interest in sociology.

As quickly as I made the decision to join the Royal Marines I made the decision to leave. After repeating various training exercises and completing a second operational tour of duty I needed a fresh challenge, this time of the cerebral kind. I left the forces in September 2002 and immediately enrolled onto a university sports degree programme at the University of Wales, Newport. It was during my years at university that I first studied sociology and psychology on a taught programme (within a sports science context). I found that my experiences within the forces had proven extremely beneficial when trying to relate theory to 'real life' situations and I thrived on these sessions.

I graduated in 2005 with first class honours and continued my studies through enrolment onto MSc and PGCE programmes. Both of these programmes of study enabled me to delve deeper into sociological and psychological theory and understanding. The research completed for my MSc dissertation followed a qualitative mode of enquiry and I thrived on this method of study. I became interested in case studies and the written narrative and completed research (for dissertations) in 'continuing with injury' – a study that tackled the question 'why do elite athletes risk severe or permanent damage to their health to achieve in sport?' and 'coping with change' – a study into the social prestige, masculinity and embodiment of power and male form that a male bodybuilder derives from his physique and the potential psychological and sociological ramifications of losing this hard-earned physique through ageing or injury.

In the background and during the time period that I completed my BSc and then MSc/PGCE I once again yearned for physical challenge and started competitive powerlifting. I had competed in various strength related sports in the forces (rugby league, judo, weightlifting and tug-of-war) and found that I had a somatotype that was responsive to resistance training, yet would never come close to reaching my physical potential due to the interruptions in my training schedule as a result of sporadic weeks/months away completing military exercises and operations. Once I had left the forces and found a more stable lifestyle my training could follow a set plan and within a year I increased my strength substantially. Within two years I had reached a level that would see me

gain an invitation to compete for my country as a member of the Welsh Powerlifting Team. This continued for a number of years in which I competed on numerous occasions on the international stage including Commonwealth and Four Nations Championships. My sporting career came to an abrupt end in 2006, not from ageing or injury as I had previously studied, but through the difficulty in balancing sporting and career ambitions after securing a full-time teaching position in a further education college.

Alongside my studies I worked as a lecturer. Firstly part time for a Welsh college by the name of Coleg Gwent and later the University of Wales, Newport (recently renamed University of South Wales). I enjoyed teaching students of different ages and academic levels and developed an interest in student motivation. In 2006 I started work as a full time lecturer in Public Services (at Mid-town College) bringing together my education and training as a teacher with my industry experience as a Royal Marine. It was through teaching and delivering the BTEC First and National Diploma in Public Services that I could see a true link between education and employment. Two opportunities for progression allowed me to gain promotion to Lecturer in Charge of Public Services and then Curriculum Manager in Sports and Public Services. I started my role as a Curriculum Manager in August 2007 aged 28 and worked in this role until promoted to the role of Deputy Head of Faculty Service Sectors in August 2010. In 2011 I was promoted to Head of Faculty Service Sectors. I have worked in this role until present. In order to fill the gaps in my education with regards to management I completed a part time ILM (Institute for Leadership and Management) Level 5 Management course. After finishing the management course in June 2009 I could not stop thinking about my next educational experience, the completion of a PhD. I had been researching into possible doctoral programmes for some time and had written to many universities outlining my research interests. After around 18 months of searching I found a HEI and PhD programme that felt right. And that is how I got to this point.

There has been an obvious omission of colleagues, friends, family and significant others in this brief life history from the college years onward. It is not that I do

not recognise the impact comrades, close friends, significant persons such as college/university lecturers, mentors, partners and my wife have played in shaping my life, views, knowledge and understanding; quite the opposite, each of these players have had considerable impact on the directions I have taken, the decisions I have made and views and perspective that I have developed. The various cultural fields that I have outlined above partly answers how these significant others have played their part in shaping my '*habitus*' (Bourdieu, 1986) even if only through the 'reproduction' (Bourdieu, 1986) of these cultural fields through the inevitable journey undertaken within their own *habitus*.

So how does this 'whistle-stop' autobiography help any potential reader understand my unique perspective and positionality as a researcher? Firstly, it may be considered that the various cultures I have encountered and (sometimes) adopted (both foreign and domestic) have had an impact on my 'bodily hexis' (Webb *et al*, 2008) through the learned, appreciated and then reproduced attitudes, beliefs, dispositions and expressions that I have encountered within the fields that I have been subject to and their relationship with my *habitus*. This brief life story also goes some way to explain the various 'cultural trajectories' that I have taken as I have moved from, to, and through various cultural fields during my time to date and how this has shaped my *habitus* and therefore my researcher positionality. It may be impossible to fully understand the unique perspective that I have as a researcher though hopefully this brief insight into my life may help the reader gain a better insight into my research perspective.

Mid-town College 'Setting the Scene'

Mid-town College is a general further education college serving the needs of the people in an area in the South West. The college locale is situated at the southern end of the district and to the north are major population centres. Although the area can be defined as semi-rural the population is growing steadily. The population is expected to grow by a further 8% in the next decade and is predicted to pick up pace as the housing market continues to recover from the recession.

The local area surrounding the college has four 11-16 schools. Mid-town College provides post-16 vocational and academic provision, following the transfer of the Sixth Form from the Local Education Authority (LEA) to the college. Outside of the local area, there are a number of large successful 14-19 schools with high performing sixth forms. These sixth forms have very limited vocational facilities and look to the college to deliver various vocational aspects of the curriculum. In recent years the college has grown significantly and improved upon its quality and national profile.

In the academic year 2008/9 there were approximately 4500 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) further education (FE) and higher education (HE) students. During 2009/10 there were approximately 4650 FTE FE and HE students (adapted from the College Higher Education Strategy, 2009). Currently (2013/14) there are over 9000 FE and HE students studying at the college.

Mid-town College's major accommodation is centred in the local town. In September 2007 the College opened a new second site facility within the town. In combination, the main Campus and second site represent 80% of the College's estate. More recently (2012) a third campus has been opened to cater for the construction and engineering curriculum within the college.

Within the college structure there are six faculties that deliver various groups of provision. The Sports and Public Services Division is situated within the Faculty of Service Sectors, which also includes the Care and Early Years and Hospitality, Catering and Event Management Divisions. The Sport and Public Services Division is situated at the main campus and currently caters for approximately 375 FTE FE and HE learners.

Summary

As research into learning motivation is scarce within the vocational FE context I believe that this study creates a base from which future research can be followed and developed. This study provides a detailed insight into the topic of learning

motivation and presents possible answers to some of the questions that have raised much debate and staffroom discussion in recent years.

Interviewing students and observing classroom sessions within the FE sector has allowed a detailed account of varying motivations to be explored and analysed. This information has provided a greater insight into the thoughts and feelings of the modern student and can be used to positively inform the development of a range of interventions and strategies. In addition to the development of learning motivation interventions, Mid-town College can also benefit from improved value added data that will help the college maintain its position as 'Outstanding'[15].

I believe there was much to be gained from following this line of research. I have further enhanced my knowledge of this subject and I am hopeful that the research presented within this study along with further research into this topic will help develop useful strategies and interventions that can be used across the FE sector, positively affecting learning motivation, and help more students to achieve.

Definitions of key terms and concepts: The following definitions outline the key terminology used in this study. Whilst these terms and concepts are introduced here, they will be discussed in greater detail and problematised in chapter two.

Field – Bourdieu's metaphor for representing sites of cultural practice. A field can be defined as a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations and appointments which constitutes an objective hierarchy, and which produce and authorise certain discourses and activities. But a field is also constituted by, or out of, the conflict which is involved when groups or individuals attempt to determine what constitutes capital within that field and how capital is to be distributed (Webb *et al*, 2008).

Habitus – A concept that expresses, on the one hand, the way in which individuals 'become themselves' – develop attitudes and dispositions – and, on

the other hand, the ways in which those individuals engage in practices. An artistic *habitus*, for example, disposes the individual artist to certain activities and perspectives that express the culturally and historically constituted values of the artistic field. (Webb *et al*, 2008).

Capital – a term used by Bourdieu (1986) to describe 'accumulated labour' in its materialised or embodied form that enables the appropriation of social energy within fields. The term 'capital' and its various forms are explored in detail in Chapter Two.

Emotional Capital – a form of capital where the resource(s) used in transaction or transubstantiation within an 'emotional economy' within a field are the agents' emotions (adapted from Ahmed, 2004).

Service Sectors **–** A Faculty within Mid-town College that comprises of departments that fall under subject sector areas 1 (services) and 8 (sport, leisure and tourism) and include the Sports and Public Services Department, the Department of Hospitality, Catering and Event Management, and the Care and Early Years Department. All subjects taught within these departments are vocational.

Value Added Measure – The YPLA (2010, p.4) states that the 'value added measure' is a calculation to be used as a tool to 'predict learner attainment and, on the basis of the expected attainment, establish target grades (or pass rates) to which learners and school or colleges may aspire' and 'make judgments about whether learners at a particular school or college are performing at, below, or above a nationally average group of learners taking the same qualification and subject, and having the same prior attainment'. In addition, they state:

> "The value added measure is intended for use by 'schools or colleges, to help them assess and improve their performance based on information about learner progress at subject, qualification, and subject sector area levels; Ofsted, to inform their initial ideas on the progress of learners, and to support judgments about school or college performance; the Department for Education (DfE), the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and other stakeholders, to inform policy-making and performance monitoring." (p.4)

Further discussion of 'value added' and its context within this study is presented at the end of the chapter (sub-section 1.1).

Vocational **–** Within the context of this study the term 'vocational' refers to vocational education; the wide range of courses/programmes that are designed to help students prepare for employment through training for a specific occupation in industry.

Progress – Like the term 'value added', the term 'progress' can be complex and problematic when used within an educational context due to the many meanings it has. Progress may refer to the positive enhancement of academic knowledge, development of wider functional skills such as problem solving or communication, and/or the acquisition of industry relevant technical/vocational skills. Within the context of this study the term 'progress' is closely linked to the value added measure and is used to describe the development of a learner towards improved outcomes based on their starting point. Therefore, unlike the value added measure, progress can be measured more frequently, for example, the progress the learner makes during a lesson.

Motivation – Motivation within the context of this study is defined as a construct that is used to explain the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of an individual's behaviour when engaging in a particular situation or task, or towards fulfilment of a particular need (adapted from Byrnes, 2001). A detailed discussion of this term is presented within Chapter Two.

Learning Motivation – Within the context of this thesis is the motivation of a student towards their learning when engaging in a programme of study. This is

not to be confused with or mistaken for learner motivation which presents a much broader scope and may relate to any task or situation that a learner engages in.

Section 1.1 The College Story: Macro Influences and their Interpretation and Reinterpretation at Meso and Micro Levels

Introduction

The following section will set the scene for the college being studied within this thesis and present discussion and discourse surrounding the key policy influences that have shaped the practice occurring within the intertwining fields at the college site. Furthermore, this section will highlight the perspective that any data are presented from and the context in which they are being discussed. The way in which data is presented and contextualised can influence the interpretation of written policy, and its reinterpretation at various levels of the organisation. Therefore setting the context of this thesis within the opening chapter is key to understanding how this research came about and the unique perspective from which it was started. Ball (1994, cited in Ecclestone, 2002) suggests that policy can become 'confused' as different 'mediators' attempt to interpret the policy text from their perspective and fit the policy text to a specific context. Further citation of Ball (1994) within Ecclestone's (2002) work suggests that policy texts are not 'clear or closed or complete' but are 'products of compromise'. These terms suggest that negotiation of and partial agreement in the hidden meaning of the policy text has taken place throughout the legislative formation of said policy. As a matter of semantics, any written document may have ambiguities', particularly if written by multiple authors, reviewed and influenced by multiple 'judges' and 'shoe horned' into a specific context. An example would be past iterations of the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework and its interpretation and reinterpretation at meso (the college site – usually by senior management) and micro (practised in lessons by teachers) levels. The following 'college story' will help in alleviating interpretative confusion relating to this study.

The College Story

Following an Ofsted inspection in 2008 the value added measure emerged as an area for development for Mid-town College and subsequently was prioritised as an areas of focus for the newly realised Quality Team (established and then developed following the 2008 inspection process). The college was awarded a grade 2 'Good' for 'Overall Effectiveness' with the qualitative feedback of being 'good with outstanding features'. Although this was interpreted as a strong result for the college, the Corporate Management Team (CMT), along with the governing body set out the plan for the development of the college for the future, both considering the feedback from the Ofsted inspection and the ever-evolving Common Inspection Framework (CIF).

The college, from a Quality Assurance perspective, operates primarily on two timescales, 1) annually – that is, following the annual self-assessment report (SAR) process and its associated policies and procedures, and 2) triennially – that is, the college strategic planning process, limited to annually reviewed three year cycles due to the perception that the Further Education landscape changes too quickly to be able to implement a useful five year or longer strategy. These two timescales are extremely important to the college due to the key influences that shape the college activity, and indeed, how the college activity is measured, that is, when measuring how successful the college is.

The two primary key influences that shape the college activity within the annual and tri-annual timescales are, 1) Funding methodology and the changes in this methodology, and 2) the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) and the changes in the CIF.

Changes in funding – The funding landscape has been unstable in Further Education over the last decade with changes to the funding agencies, the funding formulas used to determine funding allocation to a college, and the directly funded income that the college receives (DfES, 2006 and BIS, 2011). The changes have resulted in a reduction in total funding income for the college in recent years as the college is subjected to the 'more and better for less[16]' agenda (the most significant reduction in funding from 2012/13 to 2013/14 equating to

approximately 16% of income). Indeed, the opening sentence of the introduction to the College Strategic Plan (2012) states that the plan 'has been written in the context of a UK and international economic picture that will pose enormous challenges' (p.4). This statement itself, and the position it holds within the document highlights both the importance of 'funding' in shaping the strategic direction of the College, and 'challenges' the College will face regarding funding. The challenges in this instance are best understood as cuts or a reduction in funding.

Changes in the CIF – Seen as a key measure of a college's success, the outcomes of an Ofsted inspection, measured against the CIF points are key in shaping the college quality improvement process. The CIF has been through multiple changes with the latest version (2012) having four areas of focus: overall effectiveness, outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management. The value added measure (as defined in this thesis) is pertinent to all of these areas of focus, though more significantly to outcomes for learners. It was the reference to the importance of value added within the Ofsted report (2008) and the need to improve this at the college site that led to the common knowledge of, and subsequent importance of, 'value added' as a term within the College. The following quote from the Ofsted (2008) report states 'the progress young people make relative to their attainment at enrolment is satisfactory overall.' (p.8). Within the FE sector, 'satisfactory' is often interpreted as 'below the required standard' and therefore the above quote was of great concern to the college senior management team. Recent changes to the grading criteria of the CIF has led to a grade 3 representing 'requires improvement' (previously 'satisfactory').

It is important to state that a third primary timescale is evident within college activity, that is, the time between Ofsted inspections. This time period is a key influence in shaping college activity and provides a somewhat more uncertain planning and implementation window. Past inspections of the college site took place during February 2005 and January 2008 with an Annual Monitoring Visit taking place in October 2010. The outcomes of these visits have fed into the quality and strategic planning processes for the college.

The ongoing tension between quality and funding and the implementation of the 'more and better for less agenda'[16] highlights the difficult challenge FE colleges face when considering improvement, be that the value added measure or simply 'adding greater value' to an educational programme whilst managing a reduction in funding. Indeed, the funding versus quality dilemma that the College continually 'battles' with is driven by the aforementioned 'key influences' and therefore forms the backdrop for all other activity at/within the College, including the understanding of, interpretation, and use of the value added measure.

The preceding paragraphs provide some insight into the influences that shape college policy and practice (funding and CIF) and also the flow of policy drivers from macro (national) to meso (College) levels, that is, following the typical entry point for key information into the college site, via a 'top-down' approach from the Corporate and Senior Management Teams (CMT/SMT). Omitted thus far, is discussion of the reinterpretation and use of educational policy between meso (college site) and micro (by teachers in their planning and teaching practice). This will be explored in more detail later in this chapter, though firstly, it will be useful to have a basic outline of how key performance indicators (KPIs) are discussed at macro level and how they are intended to be used.

The importance of the value added measure and its use by key educational stakeholders – When discussing a learner's transition from school to FE and subsequently their motivation to learn, it is important to understand how this is measured by bodies external to the college. Although discussed within a FE context as early as the late 1970s (Gardner, 2007), it was with the development of the Learner Achievement Tracker[17] (LAT) and its implementation in 2005 that brought the 'value added measure' and the new understanding of the term 'value added' to the attention of key FE stakeholders (YPLA, 2010). Prior to this date value added within FE was defined as 'a course's contribution' to making 'a difference to pupils', in 'improving their knowledge', skills and 'capabilities' (Pratt *et al*, 1978; Harvey & Green, 1993; Bennet, 2001) and was clearly borne out of industry relevant measures for economic success (Gardner, 2007). However, in 2005 the LAT went online and provided schools, colleges and other

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interested stakeholders with data generated from the value added measure. The value added measure is a calculation based on multilevel modelling techniques that accounts for both learner and school or college level effects (YPLA, 2010). In this sense, value added is defined as:

> "…the progress of individual learners relative to the average progress made by similar learners nationally for the same qualification and subject, taking prior attainment into account. Here. 'prior attainment' refers to the qualifications attained by a learner up to the end of Key Stage 4 (typically GCSEs)." (YPLA, 2010, p.4)

Based on the above definition, value added is intended for use by (YPLA, 2010):

- Colleges for performance improvement at learner, subject and subject sector area levels;
- Ofsted to inform their judgements regarding learner progress and college performance;
- The Department for Education[18] (DfE), the YPLA and other key stakeholders to inform policy-making and the monitoring of performance (nationally/regionally).

The LAT made value added measure scores easily accessible to quality management teams within FE institutions and to those external agencies that scrutinise educational establishments (primarily Ofsted). The creation of the LAT brought about a higher prioritisation of value added, particularly due to the easily accessible quantitative data sets. The creation of the LAT and its number-centric position as a performance measurement tool led to the shift in definitions of value added (in its holistic sense) to the more data driven value added measure type definitions that are more commonly used at present. It was following the 2008 inspection that the college CMT tasked the quality team with exploring the value added measure issue. The issue involved understanding why the value added measure was low even though the lesson observation profile for the college suggested that the teaching and learning was 'good with outstanding features'. The value added measure indicated that learners were not making the progress expected of them based on their prior attainment whilst studying specific programmes within the college regardless of high quality teaching.

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Case Study: National/Extended Diploma Public Services

The previous paragraphs explain how value added became commonly known and prioritised within the college site, therefore setting the context for the following section of this chapter that explains why the National Diploma in Public Services programme was identified by the college Quality Team as having 'poor' value added and is one of the primary reasons that I came to start this research project.

Following the January 2008 Ofsted inspection, all areas of the college were scrutinised with regards to their data profile. This was a standard annual process that formed part of the quality assurance cycle where data served as a starting point for quality improvement investigation and subsequent planning. The difference (post Ofsted 2008) was that value added data, more specifically, the value added measure emerged as a primary indicator for determining how successful a programme had been. Therefore in October 2008, the 2007/8 (academic year) value added measure data for the National Diploma in Public Services course came under close scrutiny by the college management and quality assurance teams. The recorded score of -46.66 indicated (based on the LAT value added measure methodology) that on average learners studying the National Diploma in Public Service programme at the college site, were achieving approximately one grade lower than expected (based on their GCSE profile on entry). The following table highlights the scores achieved by the National Diploma Public Services cohorts in subsequent years (from 2007-8 to 2010-11). Data for 2011-12 is based on the new BTEC National Diploma specification where learners studied the revised Extended Diploma qualification.

Table 1. 2007/8 to 2011/12 Value Added Scores for National Diploma Public Services.

Qualification	2007-8		2008-09		2009-10		2010-11		*2011-12	
	Learners	Score	Learners	Score	Learners	Score	Learners	Score	Learners	Score
ND Public Services	19	- 46.66	19	9.58	30	54.62	65	6.54	62	-50.6

*First cohort of the new Extended Diploma in Public Services.

The data presented in Table 1 highlights only the cohort average score. What this score does not illustrate is the number and/or percentage of learners within the public services cohort that achieved below, at or above their expected minimum grade (based on the LAT definition of value added). The data presents a somewhat 'spikey' profile with value added scores improving significantly between 07/08 and 08/09 and again between 08/09 and 09/10 before dropping again between 09/10 and 10/11 and again between 10/11 and 11/12. The data also highlights the significant growth in numbers of learners studying the National Diploma Public Services programme with the highest level of growth (+35 learners) between 09/10 and 10/11. The data presented suggests that the high levels of growth in learner numbers between 09/10 and 10/11 mark the start of the decline in value added performance and may be a contributing factor.

Through my involvement with the Public Services department and knowledge of the learners and I believe that learning motivation is key to ensuring learners achieve as highly as expected of them. I believe if learners are highly motivated towards their study then they are more likely to achieve their minimum expected grade profile and this in turn will lead to positive value added outcomes.

Different influences at different times

There have been many key influences that have shaped how data has become known and used within FE colleges dating back to the late 1970s. I am interested, within the scope of this study, in a five-year time-span (2007/8 to 2011/12) due to this section being used to set the context of the thesis and describe the influences that led to the issue of learning motivation being explored. This specific timeframe will not result in previous influences being omitted from this report, it simply highlights the key influences that have led to this point in time.

The LAT was originally developed by the Learning and Skills Council in 2005 and was launched via an online database where FE colleges and other agencies/persons had easy access to this externally produced data. This new measure, along with the 2006 White Paper 'Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances' (a key paper in setting out educational reform within

the FE sector), set the backdrop for the re-prioritisation of key performance indicators for measuring a learner's progress at the college site.

September 2009 brought the release of the new common inspection framework where it was evident that a learner's progress would be used as evidence during inspection regimes to make judgements under 'outcomes for learners' (key judgement A, 2009 CIF), '*to make their judgements on learners' progress, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which …learners make progress relative to their prior attainment and potential*' (p.5). The YPLA (Young People's Learning Agency) released the value added handbook in 2010 to support FE providers in understanding the term, its intended use, and how it is measured. However, it was within the Handbook for the Inspection of Further Education and Skills (Ofsted, 2012) that the use of the value added score as a performance measure within the context of FE became substantiated. Point 105 (Ofsted, 2012) states:

> "Inspection uses a range of publicly available data about the provider's performance… generally provided via the data service… data used include value-added measures." (p.30).

The following table provides a timeline that captures the key influences (macro and meso) to the adoption, use and prioritisation of 'value added' at the College site in chronological order.

Table 2. Timeline of key macro and meso level influences on value added at the college site.

Pre 2008	2005 2006	LSC developed Learner Achievement Tracker (LAT) launched online Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances published College 2006-2009 Strategic Plan published
2008	**Jan** **Dec**	**Ofsted Inspection of College site** **College 2007/8 Self-Assessment Report (SAR) uploaded to Provider Gateway**
2009	**Sept** **Oct** **Nov** **Dec**	**2009 Ofsted Common Inspection Framework** **Ofsted adopted LAT VA information as evidence to be used in their inspection of post 16 education.** **College 2009-2012 Strategic Plan published** **Skills for Growth National Strategy published** **College 2008/9 Self-Assessment Report (SAR) uploaded to Provider Gateway**
2010	**April** **Oct** **Nov** **Dec**	**YPLA Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) assumed responsibility for the policy development in respect of the Learner** **Achievement Tracker Value Added (LAT VA) measure.** **Ofsted Annual Monitoring Visit of College site** **Value Added for 16-18 Learners: Learner Achievement Tracker Handbook published** **College 2009/10 Self-Assessment Report (SAR) uploaded to Provider Gateway**
2011	**Mar** **Dec**	**Wolf Report** **New Challenges New Chances White Paper published** **College 2010/11 Self-Assessment Report (SAR) uploaded to Provider Gateway**
2012	**April** **June** **Oct** **Dec**	**Responsibility for producing the LAT passed to the Department for Education (DfE)** **YPLA converted to become the Education Funding Agency (EFA)** **2012 Ofsted Common Inspection Framework published** **A good education for all - key changes for further education and skills providers (CIF Supplement) published** **College 2012-2015 Strategic Plan published** **College 2011/12 Self-Assessment Report (SAR) uploaded to Provider Gateway**
Post 2012	2013	College 2012/13 Self-Assessment Report (SAR) uploaded to Provider Gateway College Value Added Strategy published

Macro and Meso level influences

Micro level influences: how is learning motivation considered by teachers in the programme planning cycle?

It is the micro level of curriculum planning that appears to have the greatest degree of deviation from the macro level policy guidance and meso level college strategy. By 'deviation' I am referring to the evident shift in focus from course, programme, and subject sector area (SSA) planning that is driven by macro level policy, to the planning involving individual students driven by their own personal circumstances. The college attempts to achieve individual learning programmes through:

The Tutorial System (the ILP system) – The tutorial system and accompanying individual learning plan (ILP) are the two foremost features of all full time programmes of study at the college site that promote individualized and holistic support and mentoring. The tutorial system involves both group and one to one support sessions between the student and their designated Personal Tutor. During these sessions all aspects of the student's life are explored along with a strong emphasis and focus on target setting and performance monitoring.

The Learner Voice – a feedback mechanism using various methods of gathering learner's thoughts and opinions about their course and their college experience. The learner voice is collected via focus groups, learner voice meetings, programme rep meetings, student questionnaires and student forums (both physical meetings and virtual spaces).

Considering the college story so far, it can be seen that there is an increased attention and focus on the value added measure and the scores achieved at programme and SSA levels. This thesis explores why some learners do not appear to be achieving as highly as expected, and why there is a perception amongst the teaching staff that some learners are more motivated to achieve than others; and that learning motivation is key to the college achieving positive value added scores. I also need to emphasise at this point that this study is focussed on learning motivation and the learner's transition from school to college. The notion of 'value added', whilst useful in setting the context of the

thesis, is not central to the study and will not be subject to empirical investigation.

The Impact of Policy

It is evident from the policy documents reviewed that the importance of learner progress has become more important within policy documentation. This increased focus has in turn led to inclusion of 'learner progress' as a term within the Common Inspection Framework, which in turn, has driven change to the quality management and improvement processes at the college site. A sequential ripple of change has been evident from policy at macro level to implementation of college policy at meso/micro levels within both the management and teaching processes at the College. It is clear that at macro level the intention of the refocus on 'progress' within key policy documentation is an attempt to change the 'field' and 'practice' within this field in order to improve learner outcomes. In short, the intention is to create an FE educational environment where learners make better progress (than learners had previously – nationally) throughout their programmes of study in relation to their starting point at the beginning of the programme. The problem that is being explored within this thesis, is that thus far, for the National Diploma Public Services cohorts, many learners appear to be underachieving.

Summary

In summary, there has been an increase in the focus of the use of KPI (key performance indicators) to judge college performance and with this increased focus there has been a subsequent 'ripple' of revisions within policy documentation at macro, meso and micro levels. What is apparent in view of this increased focus on data at all levels, is that there has been no consistent positive impact to value added scores for the National Diploma Public Service programme at the college site. Also, the inconsistency of data that is evident within the programme score at individual learner level suggests that value added data is

questionable as a robust means of judging an organisations/managers/tutors performance in providing an academic environment that motivates learners to achieve.

In consideration of this chapter and the direction of and discussion of the chapters that follow, I will finish with reference to Ecclestone (2002) who reflects on the work of Ball (1995), suggesting that assessment policy is becoming a 'mere technology' she states;

> "Practices are divorced from social and educational aims and become, instead, impoverished ends in a compliant, ultimately meaningless, pursuit of performance targets." (p.13)

The above quote will be considered when exploring the true value of learning motivation. From a moral perspective, this means, the value to the learner in the first instance, and secondly to the institution.

Endnotes:

1. KPIs are a type of performance measure that are used to evaluate success in a given activity. Within an FE context these include attendance data, retention and achievement data, and the value added measure.

2. BTEC (Business Technology Education Council) is an international education brand that now sits under the Pearson portfolio of qualifications following a merger of the Business and Technology Education Council and London Examinations (ULEAC) to form Edexcel in 1986. BTECs are designed to meet the needs of employers, are work-related qualifications that can lead to employment or university.

3. National Awards, Certificates and Diplomas are the old style BTEC qualifications that have recently been replaced by Subsidiary, Diploma and Extended Diplomas. They equate to one, two or three A-level (see note 9) qualifications respectively.

4. MEG or Minimum Expected Grade is the minimum grade profile a learner is expected to achieve over the duration of an education programme based on their prior attainment, usually at GCSE (see note 13).

5. 'Learner voice' is the term given to the two-way communication process between the institution and the learner and is usually used for quality improvement purposes and organisation self-assessment. Learner voice may be captured using activities such as student representative forums, end of module/course surveys and suggestion boxes.

6. 'Formative assessment' is the term used to describe the ongoing assessment of learner's progress throughout their programme of study and prior to the summative assessments that are completed following the delivery of a set subject matter.

7. The LSDA (Learning and Skills Development Agency) was a publically funded body that supported further education in England. In 2006 the LSDA was disbanded.

8. Student retention is the term used to describe retaining a learner on a course or programme of study for its full duration, that is, until the formal end date. Retention is a KPI used within colleges to predict and measure success.

9. A-Levels are the formal academic qualifications offered by school sixth forms and FE colleges to learners following the completion of their GCSEs (see note 13). 'A-Level' is a term that has been shortened from General Certificate of Education Advanced Level.

10. At the time of writing this chapter further education was non-compulsory. Recent changes relating to the extension of education/training until the age of 18. Whilst there are still options, all young persons must remain in full time education (school or college), an apprenticeship, full-time employment, or volunteering combined with part-time education or training until at least their 18th birthday (Department for Education, 2013).

11. The YPLA (Young People's Learning Agency) was a UK funding body for 16-19 education in England that closed in 2012 when it responsibilities were transferred to the then newly realised EFA (Education Funding Agency).

12. Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. Ofsted inspect and regulate schools, colleges and other institutions that care for children and young people, and provide education.

13. GCSE is the acronym used for the General Certificate in Secondary Education. GCSEs are subject specific qualification usually taken by children aged 14-16 in secondary education.

14. Post compulsory education is the term used to describe education that is studied after the age of 16. See note 10 relating to the extension of the age range to 18.

15. Mid-town College was inspected by Ofsted late 2013 and achieved grade 1 'Outstanding' in all key areas.

16. Whilst the origin of the term 'more and better for less' cannot be determined, the phrase has been commonly used in the FE sector following the significant cuts in funding imposed by the coalition government (2010). The reduced FE budget combined with the drive to improve the quality of post-compulsory education through a revised Ofsted Common Inspection Framework (CIF) led to the widely adopted understanding that FE colleges had to deliver more education and training, of higher quality, with less funding.

17. The LAT or Learner Achievement Tracker is a software programme designed to allow users to access, and make use of, value added data for 16-18 year old learners.

18. The DfE or Department for Education is a ministerial department responsible for education and children's services in England.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Overview

The purpose of this study is to explore the learners' transition from school to FE and consider their personal and educational experiences in relation to learning motivation. Specifically, the study seeks to explore learning motivation in vocational further education, with particular emphasis on 'service sector' provision cohorts, and to investigate whether and why these learners may not be achieving as well as expected in post compulsory education. Whilst the first chapter introduced the study, this second chapter will continue to set the scene through the review of relevant literature.

The literature reviewed has informed the conceptual framework that surrounds the study. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) highlight the importance of the conceptual framework, and, how the literature review both sits within and informs this:

> "…the CF [conceptual framework] plays an extremely central role in the research process, as well as in the final analysis… The review and critique of existing literature culminates in a CF that posits new relationships and perspectives vis-à-vis the literature reviewed. In this way, the CF becomes the scaffolding of the study" (p.58).

The idea of the conceptual framework being the 'scaffolding of the study' suggests that the literature reviewed by the researcher indeed 'shapes' the study and provides a 'solid structure' or 'base' to work from (particularly as the initial literature reviewed at the outset of this study provided clarity to the research questions which in turn helped shape the CF). This view is supported by Miles and Huberman (1994), Merriam (1998), and Schram (2003) who concur that a conceptual framework is needed to make 'reasoned decisions' during the research process. The conceptual framework for this study will be discussed in more detail during section 2.4 (Bourdieu and capital) at the end of this chapter.

Topics Reviewed

Articulating to the purpose of this study, this critical review explores learning motivation in vocational further education. Therefore, the major areas of literature that were critically reviewed were: a) learner/learning motivation; b) learning cultures and careers; and c) the work of Pierre Bourdieu and in particular his primary 'thinking tools' of 'capital', '*habitus*', and 'field' (Rawolle and Lingard, 2008). Each of these major areas of the literature review are presented under separate subsections within this chapter.

Firstly, a review of learner/learning motivation provides an understanding of context, types, and theories of motivation and their link to learning and learner motivation to learn and achieve in further education. The literature review of this major area helped define the term 'motivation' within the context of learning to be used throughout the study and this thesis. Therefore this section of the literature review presents a broad view of the topic under discussion in order to provide a strong theoretical base from which to present the more focussed and specific sections that follow.

Secondly, a review of literature surrounding the topic of learning cultures and careers will help establish an understanding of learning motivation from a life course approach, that is, understanding how a learner's past educational experiences may have impacted their motivation (past, present and future) to learn, and more specifically, achieve as well as expected in Further Education. As my study focuses on learning motivation and the transition from school to college I felt it was important to understand the past factors that may have impacted their motivation towards learning. This section of the literature review will focus predominantly on the work of James and Biesta (2007) and their study of transforming learning cultures, the CAVTL (Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning) commissioned report (2013) 'It's about work…', and publications produced as part of the TLRP (Teaching and Learning Research Programme) in order to situate this study more securely within the context of FE, drawing on the rich data provided by these key studies into the post-16 sector. The TRLP project, the largest ever funded project in the FE sector, ran for

a four-year period from 2001-2005 resulting in 68 project outputs. The project was funded by the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) via the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TRLP, 2005).

Finally, a review of Bourdieu's concepts of capital, field and *habitus* provides the basis for understanding power relationships within the context of education and how power and capital can influence learning motivation from the perspective of both policy and practice. Bourdieu's thinking tools help piece together and make sense of the multifaceted exchange of capitals (and therefore power) that exists within the field of education. During this section of the literature review, Bourdieu's ideas will be extended to include the concept of 'emotional capital' (Reay, 2000) and therefore will not be limited to Bourdieu's own research. McNeil *et al* (2012) suggest that 'emotional capabilities' are linked to the 'achievement of positive life outcomes for young people', and 'are more important than cognitive skills' (p.29). McNeil *et al*'s study draws on the work of Goodman and Gregg (2010) who note that emotional capabilities are 'connected to positive outcomes' and that 'attitudes and behaviours account significantly for attainment gaps between children' (p.29). It appears that the investigation of emotional capabilities and how these can be used or transferred as a capital resource will help build an understanding of why some learners appear to have low learning motivation and/or not achieve as highly as expected. I therefore feel this is an important area of focus within my study.

Section 2.1 Learning and Learner Motivation

As this study is centred on learning motivation it makes sense to start with this literature topic. The review will begin with a broad outline of the key theories of learning and motivation before moving to more specific analysis and discussion of literary topics that link to learner/learning motivation, such as, assessment cultures and assessment feedback.

Learning motivation: what is it?

Firstly, it is important to establish what learning motivation is and how it is defined within the context of this study. Before moving towards a full definition of learning motivation, it is important to understand its constituent parts and how these are defined in isolation. This will allow the overarching definition of learning motivation (used in this study) to be placed in context regarding the fundamental perspective from which it was derived. The first term to be examined is 'learning' and how it is defined within this field of study.

'Learning' can mean many things to many people depending on the unique perspective from which it is viewed, measured and discussed. In order to understand the term holistically, it is helpful to understand the term within the following paradigms; behaviourism, cognitivism, constructivism, and humanism. This will be approached through consideration of key learning theories that have emerged in literature.

Learning, as approached from the perspective of behaviourism, operates on the principle that all behaviour is caused by external stimuli. All behaviour can be explained without consideration of internal mental states or consciousness. A classic example of this stimulus and response perspective of learning would be the work of Pavlov (1927) and his classical conditioning experiments with dogs. Other key thinkers who have added to this field of research include Skinner (1953), Bandura and Walters (1963) and Bandura (1969). All these scholars concur that learning is a matter of response, therefore, it is 'caused' by something. Considering this perspective, a simple behaviourist definition of learning may suggest that it is the result of behavioural changes in reaction to internal or external stimuli. This view of learning is somewhat limited and offers

no explanation regarding how information is rationalized by learners in order to account for their different levels of learning or types of response to stimuli.

Learning as viewed from the perspective of cognitivism is based around the concept that the mind can and should be opened and understood. From this perspective the learner may be viewed in a similar way to a computer i.e. information is taken in, processed and can lead to outcomes. Psychological processes such as thinking and problem-solving are explored from the perspective that learners rationalise information and then act as opposed to simply responding to stimuli. Key theories of learning within this paradigm include Merrill's Component Display Theory (1983), and, Reigeluth's Elaboration Theory (1992). A simple cognitivist definition of learning may suggest that it is simply a change in a learner's schemata. This suggests that learning is based around the idea that knowledge/information is assimilated into a set framework or pattern or plan. Where new or unfamiliar information does not fit into this framework, a new branch or section (of the framework) is formed. Although this perspective builds on the simplicity of the behaviourist view it is still somewhat limited in that it assumes that the human brain works in the same way as a machine built around a system.

A definition of learning viewed from the constructivist perspective is based around the notion that learning is a continuous process of building on previous knowledge and experiences. Learning is therefore constructed through adding new information to that already gained (previous knowledge and experiences). The paradigm is also centred on the notion that all learning is subjective, that is, it is informed by previous experiences, prior knowledge, and the situational environment. Constructivism refutes the idea that a learner is a 'blank slate' or empty vessel ready to be filled with new knowledge. Knowledge is updated and constructed from the receipt of new information and the context in which this information is acquired. Vygotsky (1962) and Piaget (1962) were among the key thinkers in moving forward the constructivist perspective of learning, and, although they have fundamentally different orientations to constructivism (where Piaget places the individual as the primary vehicle of learning and Vygotsky places social life as the primary vehicle of learning) both agree on the

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basic premise that learning is built upon previous knowledge and experience. A simple constructivist definition of learning may suggest that it is the continuous adaption and refinement of actions and knowledge based on previous knowledge and experiences and new knowledge and experiences. This definition suggests that learning is both subjective and continuous.

The final perspective that I will consider when constructing a working definition of learning is that of the Humanist paradigm. Humanism considers individuals' actions whilst considering intentionality and values. Building on the simplistic constructivist definition of learning, the humanistic perspective may consider the holistic person their life history, present situations and future intentions, and how learning is a personal act towards one fulfilling their full potential. Key thinkers within this paradigm include Rogers (1951) and Maslow (1962, 1971).

Considering all these perspectives and resultant definitions, within the context of this study (which considers elements of life course of learners and the future impact of educational policy) an appropriate definition of learning (of which to represent the term 'learning' within this study) is the continuous adaption and refinement of oneself, one's actions and knowledge based on previous knowledge and experiences, current knowledge, experiences and values, and future intentions.

Although this may appear to be too broad a definition (drawing from both constructivism and humanism) to be of use within the context of FE, I would argue that the purpose of FE goes far beyond the assimilation and understanding of knowledge pertinent to a set specification, number of criteria, or diploma. FE should provide individuals with the opportunity to develop their skills, knowledge, understanding and critical thinking generally, as well as within the context of their chosen subject area. FE should also provide individuals with the opportunity to grow and develop, to draw and reflect on personal experience and future intention, to use the subject matter as a catalyst for continuous self-improvement and preparation for the rest of their lives. This personal view of FE may appear an obvious statement, an expectation, although current education policy and recent reports (such as that conducted in 2011 by Alison Wolf)

suggests that the wider social responsibilities of FE are lost within an educational system preoccupied with data; that is, success rates (retention x achievement). This will be discussed later in more detail, though due to the importance associated with defining and setting terms to be used within (and provide context to) this study, a mention here seems appropriate.

The next term to understand is 'motivation'. Torrance and Coultas (2004, p.5) suggest that 'Definitions of motivation are very rarely discussed in the literature and the term is often invoked loosely, without definition' when referring to use of the term 'motivation' within research papers. The following quote by Torrance and Coultas (2004) further reinforces the importance of clearly defining the term 'motivation';

> "...lack of definition and operationalisation of the concept of motivation in the literature weakens a large proportion of the empirical work. It is not at all clear what authors mean when they use the term and often it simply seems to be shorthand for explaining that which is hard to explain." (p.5)

Howard (2001), who entitled her LSDA report 'Motivation is the Driver' stated within it that 'there needs to be a systematic change in the national culture towards learning' and that we need an understanding of how the education market works and what makes people believe learning will improve their lives (p.1). This is certainly an interesting view as it suggests that education, or indeed learning, is a transactional process, that is, an exchange of capital within its associated fields, and that people may be unaware of the potential value associated with learning, be it cultural (or any other form of) capital. Whilst the idea of education as capital, something of value or a reward for dedicated study is not new (Herzberg *et al*, 1959), there is still ongoing discussion regarding whether this form of motivation is extrinsic or intrinsic to the learner (Pink, 2010). This will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter when discussing power relationships and capital exchange within the field of education.

The second key point evident within Howard's report is the title itself, 'motivation is the driver'. Many scholarly definitions of motivation concur that motivation is an 'internal state' or 'condition' (Kleinginna and Kleinginna, 1981; Ames and Ames, 1984; McClelland, 1985; Stipek, 1988; Franken, 2001) with

Nohria *et al* (2001), Bernaus and Gardner (2008) and Williams and DeSteno (2008) agreeing with Howard's idea of motivation being a 'driver', with the individual driven by internal feelings towards a goal or outcome. A large body of literature supports the idea that these internal 'feelings' or 'drivers' are the result of an individual's needs. Maslow (1943 and 1954) and Alderfer (1972) were key thinkers within this humanistic approach to defining motivation. Both Maslow and Alderfer based their theories around the notion of a needs hierarchy where motivation towards the upper echelons (self-actualization, development of knowledge, growth) will only be realized once the lower echelons (security, self-existence, satisfying hunger, etc.) have been satisfied. Whilst there is a general acceptance by scholars (James, 1962; Wahba and Bridgewell, 1976; Mathes, 1981; Soper *et al*, 1995; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Thompson *et al*, 2001; Nohria *et al*, 2001; and Tay and Diener, 2011) that motivation is linked to human needs, there is little agreement regarding the identification of these needs, the number of needs identified, and the order of importance or position (of the needs) in an hierarchy, or even if an hierarchy exists at all.

However, the title used by Howard suggests something different; it personifies motivation as 'the driver', that is, driving the vehicle (of education/learning), not as an internal force but as an external entity, perhaps a metaphor for society. This poses the question – does motivation have to be defined around intrinsic feelings, compulsion, desire, or is there scope within this study to consider a sociological construct of motivation where a person's actions towards society's goals are not internalised? The separation and delineation of the many motivations that an individual embodies, assimilates and is subjected to at any one given moment in time, may help us to understand why individuals who are demotivated towards a goal/task/need, still achieve or complete it within the upper echelons of their capability, effort and perceived commitment. I believe the concept of a sociological construct of motivation should be explored within this study, as it will provide a unique perspective in which to view learning motivation, which may stimulate new thinking and idea formation. That said, an initial definition of motivation, to be used in setting the context of this study, needs to be established.

A workable definition can be found in the work of Byrnes (2001) who suggests motivation is 'a construct that is used to explain the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of an individual's behaviour in a particular situation'. Byrnes also includes the term 'engagement' into his definition. A marriage of both his thoughts may read 'a construct that is used to explain the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of an individual's behaviour when engaging in a particular situation or task'. Considering the discussion regarding human needs, the working definition of motivation to be used in this study will be 'a construct that is used to explain the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of an individual's behaviour when engaging in a particular situation or task, or towards fulfilment of a particular need'. By using this definition I do not dismiss the possibility of others (including a sociological construct of motivation), but simply provide the context from which this study is to be pursued from the outset. It is important at this point to restate the focus of my research as explained in Chapter One, and in doing so, set out the parameters of this study. 'Learning Motivation', as suggested above, can be a broad and convoluted area of research that may be approached from a plethora of perspectives. In Chapter Three (p.88-91) I discuss my philosophical, ontological and epistemological perspectives and position myself within the realm of critical constructivism. Furthermore, when discussing socio-psychological factors within this thesis I approach these issues, which relate to both sociology and psychology, as a sociologist with an awareness of the psychological factors. Therefore the learners' transition from school to college, their learning careers and their subsequent learning motivation focuses predominantly on the social network, relationships and the exchange of 'capital'. Whilst I understand there is a large body of literature supporting the psychological perspective of learning motivation, I do not intend to discuss this in detail here.

Assessment and Motivation

During the literature retrieval process, the majority of papers, articles and texts returned from the key word searches were centred on assessment and its impact on learning/learner motivation. Torrance and Coultas summarised in their (2004) LSDA report that assessment methods (be that coursework, exam, etc.) had a significant impact on learning motivation, where certain methods, such as formal examinations, can cause fear in learners, to the point where they 'precipitate drop-out and deter progression'. This idea is further supported through the work of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme and the 14-19 Education and Training Commentary paper (TLRP, 2006) where it is suggested:

> "It is possible to support the development of more confident learners within education and training, often after making explicit changes from the approaches to learning which caused difficulties in the past. Hence the decision of some learners to opt for programmes on the basis that they do not include formal examinations" (p.11)

This is an interesting point as it supports Bloomer and Hodkinson's (1999) idea of 'learning careers' and 'assessment careers', where preferences to assessment types are developed over time (their educational career to date) and in relation to a learner's experience of success or failure with particular assessment types. This line of thought is particularly important to my own study that is exploring learning motivation within a vocational FE setting (BTEC programmes) where the assessment is primarily coursework driven. It has been interesting to explore with the participants involved in my study the importance of assessment when deciding their route through FE to HE or employment, where the available options such as BTEC National Diploma or A-levels can be easily distinguished from the assessment methods associated with them (where A-Levels make use of the traditional summative examination). The idea of a learning career is further reinforced through the project work commentary published by the TLRP (2008) where Jephcote and Salisbury (2007) reflect on their research in learning within FE, stating; "Students' prior experiences of schooling are often negative and students cite this poor experience to explain and justify their current attitudes to

learning" (p.14). This statement emphasises the importance of a learner's past educational experiences in shaping their learning disposition, and provides insight into the challenge faced by teachers and lecturers when aiming to increase motivation towards learning.

Another key idea to emerge from the literature is Ecclestone's (2002) claim that many learners aim low in order to work within their comfort zone rather than strive to achieve their full potential in the subject. Ecclestone's explanation for this learner choice is to reduce the possibility of failure. This notion is supported by McClelland *et al* (1976) and their theory of achievement motivation and personality types where an individual with a high 'N'ach' (need to achieve) personality strives for excellence and the highest possible outcome, whereas an individual with a high 'N'af' (need to avoid failure – not to be confused with N'aff (need for affiliation)) personality avoids challenge, has a heightened fear of failure and does not like assessment or its associated feedback. This theory certainly helps with the understanding of the notion of 'assessment careers' where these careers would be shaped by the learner's personality and dispositions that may in turn have been shaped by early assessment outcomes. Within the TLRP 14-19 Education and Training Commentary Report (2006) the idea of a learner's assessment career being shaped is reinforced through the statement;

> "...navigating a path is a socially constructed process. Peer groups, family and teachers influence the choices that are made. The range of roles and pathways on offer depend on how the labour market is structured and how work is organised." (p.11)

This provides another perspective where the early assessment strategies would have been selected for, instead of chosen by, the learner and hence the start of a socially constructed individual assessment career where structure shapes the agent. The idea of vocational BTEC learners having a high level of N'af personality and being motivated by less challenging 'hunter gatherer' (Bates, 2002) assessment strategies is certainly plausible. Bloomer (1998) supports Bates' view suggesting that learners on vocational programmes follow a 'treasure hunt' approach to learning. Both 'hunter gatherer' and 'treasure hunt' terms refer to learning and assessment strategies where learners seek and

search for information. In addition, Bathmaker's (2001) study of GNVQ students further reinforces the notion that learners on vocational programmes may have N'af tendencies. "Although [students] now wish to succeed, they equally wish to avoid any further possibility of failure" (p.89 cited in Torrance and Coultas, 2004), however, it is important to note the difference in level of learners participating in these studies, particularly between Ecclestone's (2002) and Bathmaker's (2001) studies where the former related to advanced level learners and the latter to foundation level. As stated by Torrance and Coultas (2004) the difference between learner levels may call for a different approach to the respective level of challenge set for them; 'It is not unreasonable to expect that an advanced programme should be held to account for restricting rather than expanding students' intellectual ambitions' (p.23). Exploring why the participants in this study may prefer a certain type of assessment may help shed further light on this topic. The following quote from the TRLP (2006) 14-19 Education and Training Commentary paper further supports the link between assessment and motivation;

> "Different forms of assessment facilitate particular outcomes over others, while some qualifications are more rewarding for some learners than for others, and have different effects on their motivation." (p.12)

Understanding how learners associate value or capital with qualifications may provide further insight into learning motivation.

Section 2.2 Learning Cultures

James and Biesta (2007), in the opening paragraphs of their extensive study into improving learning cultures in further education, state that 'good teaching does influence learning, but it does not determine it.' (p.3). This idea, from my perspective, forms the central core of the notion of learning cultures, that is, learning is not something that is 'done to you'. James and Biesta suggest that learning cultures are;

> "…the complex interaction between the many factors, dimensions and influences that shape the learning opportunities for students… Learning cultures are the social practices through which people learn." (p.3)

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This suggests that learning is a 'multifaceted', 'complex' and 'uncertain' phenomenon where the 'opportunity' for learning to take place can be influenced or improved, though the outcome, the learning that actually takes place, depends on many variables. Furthermore, the transition phase from school to college adds to this complexity. The 14-19 Education and Training Report published by the TLRP (2006) states;

> "Learners face major changes during the 14-19 phase, not least because this is the time when young people develop behaviours and attitudes associated with the transition to adulthood. These changes affect their perspectives on school, their attachment to different subjects and their aspirations for further education and training. (p.9)

In another report from the TLRP, Jephcote *et al* (2008) highlight the complexity of learning within an FE context stating; "learning in FE colleges is the product of social interaction between teachers and students, the prior experiences of both groups, social and economic conditions, and the policy framework" (p.14). This section of the literature review will focus on this idea of 'learning as a social practice' and draw primarily from the extensive work of James and Biesta (2007) and the 'Transforming Learning Cultures' (TLC) project. Whilst this section draws heavily from the TLC project (part of the TLRP project work[1]), which with its associated publications forms a large part of the existing body of literature centred on UK FE learning cultures, this does not mean that this work is without its critics. Orr (2013) argues that the TLC project focuses on the 'local' [issues within local workplace settings as opposed to the big issues in society] thus 'understating' the significance of wider cultural influences on learning.

Influencing Cultural Change

The TLC project (2001-2005) had a clear objective to establishing better learning and subsequently better learning outcomes (be that grades, knowledge etc.). The view being, 'change the culture'. The following paragraphs will explore the development of learning cultures, how they are socially reproduced and/or transubstantiated, and identify some of the key influences to cultural change from a further education perspective.

Learning cultures exist through 'interaction and communication' and are '(re)produced by individuals, just as much as individuals are (re)produced' by learning cultures (James and Biesta, 2007). It is this idea of cultures and individuals never being 'totally free' from one another that reinforces learning cultures as 'complex social practices' that are 'always in transformation' yet have remained broadly stable due to the reproduction of key cultural influences such as the physical environment and assessment practices. Although the previous sentences present a vivid oxymoron, it is the ever-present dichotomy of funding versus quality of teaching practice that drives the overarching macro level influence of the 'more and better for less agenda' that in turn supports the reproduction of some aspects of FE learning culture, whilst allowing other aspects to transubstantiate into new cultures. An example being the use of technology and the emergence of the Further Education Learning Technology Action Group known as FELTAG (BIS, 2014).

Although the idea of changing culture for improving learning is simplistic (James and Biesta, 2007; Kaplan and Owings, 2013), its implementation is highly complex. Within an identified field, the existing social sphere will involve interactions between individuals within this field. These individuals have a socially constructed *habitus* of their own that may include a number of fields that are, to a lesser or greater extent, having an influence on the dispositions of all agents within the field. The CAVTL (2013) report 'It's about work...' reinforces the idea of agents' dispositions influencing the field stating; "Vocational learners are not passive recipients – they bring their own experiences, knowledge and expectations of life and work to the process of vocational learning" (p.11). It is the idea that all individuals have their own position within a field that highlights the complexity of and subsequent difficulty in influencing cultural change. Each individual will bring their own experiences, background and disposition to a field, which in turn will influence the field itself and the cultures that are associated with the field. Cultures are then, continually in a state of change with the degree of the level of change governed by the degree to which the overarching key influences maintain their stability, are increased/decreased in intensity or are removed. It is therefore important for teachers and educational managers to

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understand how to create interactions within a field that have a positive influence on shaping learning cultures for the better (Miller and Satchwell, 2006). In attempting this, the teachers and educational managers will need to understand the key factors that influence learning culture and which of these can be influenced, to what extent, and at what levels (macro, meso and micro). For instance, policy is a factor that can influence learning culture which is sometimes out of the control of the teacher or manager. A teacher can adapt their practice and create impetus for change, though will be regulated by internal quality assurance systems such as an internal lesson observation process that are in turn driven by external scrutiny (Ofsted Common Inspection Framework). Funding is another macro level factor that is not within the control of the teacher at micro level and curtails the actions of the managers.

In their 2007 paper 'Understanding Learning Cultures' Hodkinson *et al* present the following 'influences' that 'contribute significantly' to a learning culture.

- "the positions, dispositions and actions of the students;
- the positions, dispositions and actions of the tutors;
- the location and resources of the learning site;
- the syllabus or course specification, the assessment and qualification specifications;
- the time tutors and students spend together, their inter-relationships, and the range of other learning sites students are engaged with;
- college management and procedures, together with funding and inspection body procedures and regulations, and government policy;
- wider vocational and academic cultures, of which any learning site is part;
- wider social and cultural values and practices, for example around issues of social class, gender and ethnicity, the nature of employment opportunities, social and family life, and the perceived status of further education (FE) as a sector." (p.415-416).

The above influences highlight the complexity of the learning cultures that are established and reproduced at FE learning sites. Later in this study, a number of

key influences will be explored in relation to their level of influence in shaping a learning culture in order to understand which of these should be prioritized by teachers and managers within regards for creating cultural change at meso (college) and micro (teaching session) level at the learning site pertinent to this study. As James and Biesta (2007) suggest, the overarching complexity of viewing learning and learning cultures holistically, emphasizes the 'partial inadequacy' of existing theoretical approaches to learning that do not consider the full range of influences. It is clear within the influences listed that some fall within the control of teachers and managers whilst others will be outside of this control, some are structurally biased whilst others may be considered pertinent to agency. James and Wahlberg (2007) suggest that the common assumption that teachers themselves are in a position to bring about positive change to teaching and learning is misconceived. It would be easy at this point to fall into the formulaic approach to understanding how these influences interact to create a culture through presenting well established dualisms for further contextualized discussion. This approach will be avoided in this study through using Bourdieu's conceptual tools (field, *habitus*, and capital) to understand how the influences of culture work within, around and overlap one another as an ever-changing fluid force that is continually in a state of flux.

James and Biesta (2007) suggest that understanding how people learn and the barriers to learning is 'central' to understanding learning cultures. In keeping with this idea the following barriers to learning, as suggested by Torrance and Coultas (2004) are presented in four main groups:

- "structural factors – economic, social factors including academic attainment, social class, employment status and state of the labour market;
- policy-related factors including the effect of legislation and the configuration of funding mechanisms;
- supply-related or institutional factors including institutional ethos, attitudes and behaviour;
- personal and cultural factors (dispositional and situational factors), including perceptions of a range of different types of risk." (p.8)

The four groups appear to fit with the 'influences' highlighted by Hodkinson *et al* (2007) and reinforce the idea of a complex and fluid set of factors that have an influence on shaping and reshaping the learning culture and therefore learning that takes place at a particular site. This is particularly pertinent to the first point 'structural factors' when discussing the 14-19 'transition phase'. An excerpt from the TRLP (2006) 14-19 Commentary Report states:

> "14-19 education and training are also important because they set people on particular pathways and learning career trajectories. These affect their future skill development, their attitudes to formal and informal learning, their economic outlook, the opportunities open to them and their personal development." (p.8)

This excerpt highlights the importance of structure and policy in influencing cultural change and the potential reproduction of 'learning trajectories'. It appears that the key to guiding cultural change in a positive direction is to understand the key influences, the ways in which these can be influenced in a way that is significant, and the actors that carry the capital (and therefore power) required to have significant influence.
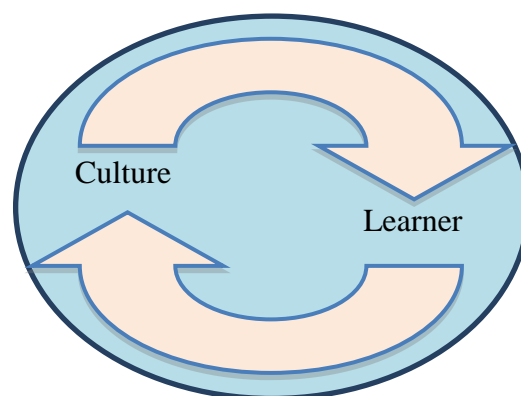
Figure 2.1. Cyclical Influence Model: A reciprocal influence of learners and the development and reproduction of cultures.

Another important factor to consider is the cyclical influence of the learning culture on the learner and the learner on the learning culture (fig 2.1). The complexity surrounding the idea of a learning culture, from a holistic perspective, is compounded by the idea that learning is a key factor in which dispositional

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change occurs in individuals (Hodkinson *et al*, 2007). This suggests that the learning culture may change the learner, through changes to their world views, positions and dispositions which then in turn changes the field in terms of the positions, dispositions and actions of the learner. If the learner is subjected to a set curriculum, with an established programme specification that is delivered through an established teaching pedagogy, it is easy to understand how learning cultures can be reproduced to some extent. However, outside of these forces, the diverse mix of students who enrol onto a programme of study, and the life histories they bring to an educational field will have an impact on the rate of, and extent to, which a culture is reproduced within a field (Hodkinson and Bloomer, 2000). Although I am trying to avoid the structure/agency dualism, factors such as numbers of learners from a particular social class, or of a particular religion, etc. are apparently significant in the development of a learning culture. James and Biesta (2007) reinforces the need to avoid taking too narrow a view of learning, stating;

> "[We] must try to address the complexity of relationships between teachers, teaching, learners, learning, learning situations and the wider context of learning. Where educational research focuses on particular variables and, especially where these are narrowly defined, there is always a danger of decontextualizing the study [of learning cultures]." (p.11)

The quote emphasizes the importance of the whole rather than its component parts in developing a sound understanding of what a learning culture is and how learning cultures may be changed. The TLC project emphasized this idea along with Bruner's (1996) notion that 'learning and thinking are always situated in a cultural setting, and are always dependent upon the utilization of cultural resources' (p.4) as a basis for examining learning cultures. Furthermore, Bloomer and Hodkinson's (2000) study found that 'students' dispositions towards learning were intricately related to their wider social lives' (James and Biesta, 2007). I too accept these ideas and paid due diligence to them within this study through the application of Bourdieu's (1986) concept of 'capital', including cultural and emotional capitals.

Additional to an holistic view of learning through the idea of learning cultures, it is important to understand, within the scope of this study, the meaning and position of the term 'culture', which as Williams (1983 cited in James and Biesta, 2007) suggests is 'one of the two or three most difficult words in the English language' (p.21). Definitions of the term 'culture' range from 'the cultivation of individuals through the agency of external forms objectified through the course of history' (Simmel, 1971), to, McGrew's (1998) idea that culture is a 'group-specific behavior that is acquired, at least in part, from social influences.' My view supports the approach used to underpin the TLC project, in the general acceptance of the anthropological definitions where culture is discussed as 'a way of life', being constituted through the production and reproduction of social activity (James and Biesta, 2007). Applying Bourdieu's conceptual framework in a broad sense, it may be suggested that learning cultures can be understood in a similar way as 'educational fields', not to be confused with the broadest scale of education as a field in its own right, but as the particular field that exists at a particular learning site within which learning cultures are produced and reproduced dependent upon how the various influences or forces meet and interact.

The final section of this literature review will again focus on a paper that was borne out of the findings of the TLC project. Hodkinson *et al*, (2007) suggests that prior to the completion of the TLC project there were no studies that considered all of the factors that impact learning and learning culture at once and therefore this led to an 'increasingly extensive' body of literature consisting of studies that may not consider one or more of the aforementioned key factors or influences. Hodkinson *et al* (2007) identify five 'broad problematic trends' within the current body of literature, stating "within participatory approaches to learning there is:

- A tendency for individual differences and individual learning to disappear, with the focus on social interactions, activities and participation. Evident within Anderson *et al*, (1996).
- A tendency to focus on the particular site where learning takes place (such as a specific workplace), thus bracketing off and largely ignoring wider social, cultural and structural influences.

- A tendency to downplay issues of inequality and power relations within and beyond the site. An exception is Engestrom's (2001) study of socio-cultural theory.

- A tendency to separate out the agency of individual learners from the social structures that they are seen to inhabit, focusing on one or the other, not both.

- A tendency for the majority of post-Vygotskian research and theorizing on learning to retain a concentration on cognition, rather than seeing learning as practical and embodied (e.g. Rogoff, 2003; Edwards, 2005)." (p.417)

Through applying Bourdieu's concepts of field, *habitus* and capital to make sense of the findings of this study, I will minimize the opportunity for marginalization of important factors and influences (to learning cultures) through the downgrading of common dualisms that had caused this marginalization in pre-TLC studies. Hodkinson *et al*, (2007) explains the marginalization evident within existing (pre-TLC) literature as the 'need' for a 'holistic' approach and 'the problem of scale'. The second issue being one I concur with through the understanding (through engaging with the literature) of depth and resource required to undertake a project to the scale of the TLC. It is evident through my literature review that it is by the far the largest scale research study of its type resulting in 68 project publications between 2001 and 2008.

In summarizing this section of the literature review it is evident that prior to the TLC project (and the subsequent project publications) there were limited studies that focused directly on learning cultures as a means of understanding learners motivation to learn in FE. It is also evident that the TLC project publications were the first to consider learning cultures in their entirety, from a holistic perspective. It therefore feels appropriate that the main focus of this review of literature centres on the TLC publications as one of the main bodies of literature to support my thesis, particularly in keeping with my constructivist researcher positionality and the holistic approach taken in completing this thesis through three strands.

I am not attempting to answer the big questions within this thesis, such as, whether or not everything that happens within a society is the result of a learning culture; nor am I going to expand my study beyond the field of education to the extent where it resembles life course. I will however, be mindful of these bigger philosophical questions during the discussion sections (Chapter Five) of this thesis and in particular when using Bourdieu's conceptual tools.

Section 2.3 Bourdieu and Capital

As mentioned in the introductory section of this literature review, the work of Pierre Bourdieu (and others) will be discussed and analysed in order to provide an insight to, and basis for, understanding power relationships that may exist within education and how 'power' and 'capital' can influence learning motivation from the perspective of both policy (creation and interpretation) and practice (policy enactment). Other models/theories of power relationships were explored such as Habermas' (1984 and 1987) theory of communicative action, and, Foucauldian discourse analysis (Kendall and Wickham, 1999). Whilst they may have been useful as conceptual tools in advancing my thesis, I felt they were also restrictive in their tendency to draw in the 'structure versus agency' dichotomy (Habermas) or political orientation (Foucault). When considering 'communicative action' the focus on 'argumentation' where individuals seek a mutual understanding of phenomenon through debate, presents the basis for what Habermas (1984) terms 'communicative rationality'. Communicative rationality is a concept that gives credence to the 'better argument' where inter-subjective rationality emerges through forms of communication. Habermas (1987) discusses communicative action within two realms or 'worlds', the 'system' and the 'lifeworld'. The 'system' may be understood as the communication that takes place within established systems where rules, protocols and forms of etiquette may influence the communication in some way. Within the 'system', communication is not absent from coercive forces. In contrast, communication in the 'lifeworld' presents the notion that forms of communication can exist without known power relationships leading to power-

free communication. Habermas (1987) explains that both the lifeworld and system can never be mutually exclusive from one another and therefore proposes a structure versus agency dichotomy. Foucault presents a contrasting perspective where knowledge and communication is identified as 'power' and therefore can be used for purposes of control and manipulation. Foucault's work therefore contradicts that of Habermas through suggesting that a better educated or more knowledgeable person can present their argument in a more convincing way thus rendering communication itself as a coercive force. Reflecting on the purpose of my study and my position as an 'insider researcher' (see Chapter Three, page 122), I require a conceptual framework that recognises the power-relationships that exits within the field of further education though allows exploration of this phenomenon (learning motivation) without situating the study within the two extremes offered though the Habermasian and Foucauldian approaches. With the hierarchical management structure evident at the College, my position as a senior manager, and my relationship with the participants involved in the study, I believe the theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1984; 1987) and Foucauldian discourse analysis (Kendall and Wickham, 1999) would be restrictive as a theoretical framework for my study, and lead me to an investigation of known dichotomies. Bourdieu's conceptual tools go some way to eliminate known dichotomies and dualisms and thus provide a more holistic and open conceptual framework (Webb *et al*, 2008). Whilst immersing myself in Bourdieu's work I did not feel I was being guided, constrained or influenced. In contrast I felt enlightened and open-minded. Foucault and Habermas have opposing ideas of the nature of power within society. Bourdieu appears to me to encompass the whole argument within a far more open and useful set of conceptual tools (see below). I therefore decided to use Bourdieu and not Foucault and/or Habermas in developing my conceptual framework. Essentially, this was due to the exploratory nature of my study, the research questions being asked and the freedom offered by Bourdieu's concepts.

Bourdieu's 'conceptual triad' (capital, field and *habitus*), are useful 'tools' (Rawolle and Lingard, 2008) for exploring power relationships within learning environments and how they impact learning motivation. Following an initial

introduction to these concepts, this section of the literature review will focus on the literature that supports or refutes their worth. The discussion will then move beyond Bourdieu's foundations of 'capital' and explore the idea of 'emotional capital'.

Probably one of Bourdieu's most well-known (and well used – Couldry, 2003; Hardy and Lingard, 2008; Lingard, Rawolle and Taylor, 2005; Warde, 2004) conceptual thinking tools is the idea of 'capital'. Harker *et al* (1990) suggests that:

> "the definition of capital is very wide for Bourdieu and includes material things (which can have symbolic value), as well as 'untouchable' but culturally significant attributes such as prestige, status and authority (referred to as symbolic capital), along with cultural capital (defined as culturally valued taste and consumption patterns)… For Bourdieu, capital acts as a social relation within a system of exchange, and the term is extended 'to all the goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation". (cited in Webb *et al*., 2008, p.22).

This definition suggests that the 'untouchable' capital such as status, with regards to the FE classroom and student peer group, may influence both positive and negative behaviours where negative behaviours are those which have a detrimental effect on the learning environment, learning motivation, and, as a result, the amount and quality and type of learning that takes place. For instance a student performing as the 'class clown' may, or may not depending on the cultural micro-field that is the peer group, gain social capital and be highly placed within that particular cultural field. This may also be true of the students who are seen as, or act up to being, the 'teacher's pet'. Whether or not the two characters' actions bring about a positive or negative impact on learning motivation for themselves and/or others will depend on the number and strength of interaction between the various fields that are brought to the learning environment or college subject field. This leads us to the second of Bourdieu's conceptual tools 'field'. 'Field' can be defined as:

> "a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations, appointments and titles which constitute an objective hierarchy, and which produce and authorise certain discourses and activities... it is also constituted by, or out of, the conflict which is involved when groups or individuals attempt to determine what constitutes capital within that field" (Webb *et al*, 2008, p.21-22).

The use of the term 'conflict' and the idea that 'individuals attempt to determine what constitutes capital' certainly supports the notion of existing power relationships or indeed power struggles within educational fields. The difficulty with interpreting capital in order to understand and make use of it to influence a situation such as a lesson is compounded by the dynamic nature of capital, fields and time. Bourdieu explains that capital and fields are not rigid and remain 'fluid'. If this is the case, how can we (as teachers, lecturers, educators) manipulate the capital within educational micro fields (such as a student cohort) to bring about the change in perspective of each student where high grades, positive tutor feedback and personal development of skills and knowledge has the highest value of capital? This is particularly challenging when current classroom culture may recognise these attributes as 'swotty' or 'uncool'! It may be that the perception of what holds kudos and/or capital to students may have to be challenged and somehow changed.

It is easy to see that the end result of a successfully completed programme of study (the diploma or degree along with the associated knowledge and skills gained from studying the programme) has value or indeed capital, as it can be exchanged for a particular job (one where a particular qualification is a prerequisite for application and appointment). This is evident when applying for the next level of education, e.g. a learner finishing their BTEC National Diploma and applying for a Degree course will not be awarded a place at the Higher Education Institution (HEI) if they do not have the prerequisite entry qualifications. However, these entry qualifications can sometimes be mitigated if a student has 'mature' status and experience, i.e. they are of a certain age/background. In these cases, time holds value (capital) and can be exchanged in a similar way as a Diploma.

In order to understand the exchange of capital that may occur within a learning environment (or associated fields) it is important to understand the interaction of social fields. Rawolle and Lingard state (2008);

> "For Bourdieu (1986), each social field provides a way of accumulating and distributing field specific forms of capital (social capital, cultural capital, symbolic capital and national capital) and mechanisms for the conversion of capital between fields; each of these forms of capital is in a sense a 'transubstantiation' of economic capital." (p.732)

Within the above quote the term 'transubstantiation' suggests that forms of capital are not only exchanged within fields but can be transformed or converted from one form into another. This idea certainly adds clarity to the understanding of capital and particularly the concept that capital may look different and have different associated value depending on who is observing it, i.e. from which field, within which point in time, and, for what reasons? Rawolle and Lingard expand their understanding of social field;

> "In order to study a social field, Bourdieu seeks to provide an account of the relations between agents within the field through studies of their practices. Researching a field involves the identification of practices attached to it, identifying dominant and dominated agents within a field and measuring different forms of capital possessed by agents." (2008, p.732)

The above quote is important as it highlights the dynamics associates with a social field. Before exploring the power players (key agents) within a field and the capital they bring and exchange or transform, and the impact of this transference on learning motivation, it is important to understand the various forms of capital and how much value these forms of capital have within a particular field within a particular point in time.

Key forms of capital

It is important to note that capital can transubstantiate, though all forms of capital can be associated within one or more of the following broad categories (or as Bourdieu, (1986) refers to as 'fundamental guises'); social, cultural and economic.

Social capital may be described as the level of influence that can be assimilated and then exchanged in relation to one's position in social space. Moschetti and Hudley (2015) define social capital as "…the value of a relationship with another person that provides support and assistance in a given social situation." (p.236). Whilst this definition is limited in comparison to Bourdieu's (1986) definition "…the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p.241), it does provide a useful concept in understanding the value of relationships and the types of social capital transactions that may take place in an educational setting, e.g. 'support and assistance'. Moschetti and Hudley (2015) discuss 'working-class, first-generation' students and the difficulty they may have trying to locate assistance when they first arrive at college due to the potential 'lack of social capital that would give them a network' within this educational field (p.237). They suggest that 'all students can build social capital' through integration 'academically and socially' into college life. Furthermore, they present the notion of 'institutional agents' as sources of social capital, referring to the student support services available at the college site. New learners with limited social capital in an educational field can therefore access these services, adding them to their network and subsequently increasing their social capital and the acquisition of resources and opportunities available to them.

Social capital may be increased through networking, forming new relationships and manipulation of one's outward facing self and its reception within society. Anheier *et al* (1995) suggests that social capital "is the sum of the actual and potential resources that can be mobilized through memberships in social networks of actors and organizations" (p.862). It is important to note that social

capital can vary in its value across different social spaces. The value of the social capital depends on the field(s) that interact to provide the arena for capital exchange, and what constitutes capital, that is, what is of value, within this arena. Cedefop (2011, cited in CAVTL, 2013) discusses the capital exchange that can occur through learning, stating; "And it is important to stress that there is evidence to show individuals also derive wider social benefits from participating in good quality vocational programmes" (p.7).

Cultural capital is the level of influence that is available through association with various cultures (national/regional/local) and accumulation of culturally significant items, which have value (capital) within a cultural field. Anheier *et al* (1995) states;

> "Cultural capital exists in various forms. It includes long-standing dispositions and habits acquired in the socialization process, the accumulation of valued cultural objects such as paintings, and formal educational qualifications and training." (p.862).

This extends cultural capital to include education. Bourdieu (1986) explains the notion of cultural capital through three different states: the embodied state; the objectified state; and the institutionalized state.

The embodied state emerges from Bourdieu's idea that cultural capital can be linked to the body and 'presupposes embodiment'. It suggests that culture can be digested or consumed by individuals and the process of consuming culture, over time, has a payoff, i.e., the knowledge and experiences an individual acquires over time is assimilated and reproduced within said individual. Bourdieu likens the acquisition of culture to body builders crafting their physiques. Over time the input (in this case resistance training and specialized dieting) accumulates and transubstantiates into another form of capital; that which is gained through the ownership of a toned muscular body. Cultural capital gained associated within the embodied state (that which may be acquired and may lead to self-improvement) involves a degree of effort (investment) from the individual or 'investor' (Bourdieu, 1986). The effort or 'investment' that Bourdieu refers to is often time. This notion of a time investment supports the idea that time itself is a form of capital. Just as a fine wine or a vintage car may increase in economic

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capital over time, so may the cultural capital of a person, although with embodied cultural capital there needs to be an input over time, for the purpose of this literature review (and overall study) the input will be termed 'experience'.

Cultural capital in its objectified state is evident (as the term suggests) in objects, material objects such as paintings, sculptures, art forms etc. Cultural capital in this state (unlike the embodied capital) can be transformed into economic capital far more easily and instantaneously.

Cultural capital in an institutionalized state is (as stated by Bourdieu) 'the objectification of cultural capital' into various forms such as credentials or academic qualifications. The notion of the institutionalized state of cultural capital allows a more simple process of transaction in changing cultural (embodied) capital into economic capital, as the degree or other academic qualification may provide access to a high paid job.

Economic capital is perhaps the easiest form of capital to place due to its popular known association with monetary exchanges. The higher the salary, available finances, and, saleable items; the higher the economic capital available for exchange to an individual. Economical capital can refer to one's estate and belongings, and ability to purchase these (Bourdieu, 1986).

Within the introduction to this section of the literature review there is mention of capital and its position relative to time. This leads to the notion that capital (in its various forms) may have a 'shelf life'. Anheier *et al* (1995) refers to capital and how it can 'differ in liquidity' and its 'potential loss through attrition and inflation', Anheier *et al* suggests economic capital is the 'most liquid' ie is easily transubstantiated into other forms of capital and in the process can increase or decrease in value. This notion certainly adds to the idea of embodied cultural capital and highlights the significance of time in understanding the movement of capital within its various forms and within the various fields that it exits in.

Extending Bourdieu's Idea: Emotional Capital
Reay (2000) and Zembylas (2007) have extended the notion of social capital to include emotional capital as a conceptual tool. In expanding Bourdieu's toolset,

the idea of emotional capital can be used to make sense of how agents can use emotions, and/or, are affected by emotions when determining position within a particular field (in this case the learner cohort in a lecture). Zembylas (2007, p.444) uses the term 'emotional resources' when referring to emotional capital. The idea of emotions being resources, i.e., being at one's disposal and available for use and/or exchange, makes for easier understanding of their value as capital. This idea, then makes it far easier to understand how emotions, as capital, can be exchanged via a transaction for other forms of capital. Zembylas therefore suggests that emotions may be 'managed' within the social sphere in 'conformity with collective social norms' (Zembylas, 2007).

It is evident that Bourdieu's concept of 'capital' provides a useful thinking tool in understanding the 'value' of emotion and the various transactions that may occur within particular fields. Ahmed (2004) identifies one particular field; he explains that emotions function within an 'emotional economy'. This supports the idea that emotions may form part of a transaction, but goes further in introducing the idea that emotional capital may be viewed in the same way as 'goods' or 'services' and moved around within a 'supply and demand chain' for a socially agreed amount of capital, be it economic or other form, within a specific social network. These ideas help us understand the term 'emotional capital' as a form of capital in its rudimentary definition. However, understanding of what constitutes an 'emotional resource' needs to be established in order to fully understand how emotions can indeed be used in transactions and transubstantiations.

Gendron (2004) suggests that emotional capital is based on the availability of 'emotional intelligence' and 'emotional competencies'. Gendron cites Bar-On's (1997) definition of emotional intelligence, that is, "an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (p.7). The use of the term 'skill' within the definition suggests that emotional intelligence can be learned. Taking this idea further, Gendron (2004) refers to the observations of Goleman (1995) stating:

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- "Our emotional responses are mainly handled by a part of our brain called the reptilian brain, because it has similar functions to those of reptiles. These responses are mostly automatic, such as the familiar flight-or-attack response triggered up by threatening situations. We have evolved in such a way that an 'emotional hijacking' takes place that provides a quick answer to life's critical situations.
- In humans, this reptilian brain is wired up to the neocortex, which can therefore exert some control towards these automatic responses.
- The amount of control has a genetic component; yet, it is possible to learn to control emotions to a certain degree. Most people do learn this at some point in their lives. Further, it is possible to learn it further achieving greater abilities to manage emotions.
- There does not exist a strong correlation between the intelligence quotient (IQ) and success in life, however, one defines success. According to Goleman, success is mainly due to emotional intelligence" (p.7).

These observations suggest that emotional intelligence is a psychological trait that enables the management of one's emotions by an individual to their advantage within specific circumstances. From this, it is easy to understand why emotional intelligence only forms part of Gendron's conceptual model for emotional capital, primarily due to degree of agency that is suggested. However, emotional intelligence is not useful on its own in trying to understand how emotions, external to the agent, within a given field can be used as social energy or a resource to their benefit and the benefit of others. To make sense of this Gendron (2004) draws further on the work of Goleman and Boyatzis (2008) and their idea of 'emotional competency'. He explains that emotional competencies are 'based on emotional intelligence' and 'a certain level of emotional intelligence' is required to learn an emotional competency. Goleman (1998 cited in Gendron, 2004) refers to two categories of emotional competency, personal and social. Personal competencies include 'self-awareness, 'self-regulation' and 'motivation'. Social competencies include 'social awareness' and 'social skills'. It is interesting that Goleman defines motivation as a personal emotional competency as it suggests that motivation can be learned and is the result of an 'emotional state' that drives individuals to achieve. This definition does appear limited in in comparison to a more sociological construct of motivation where emotions can be exchanged as a resource as opposed to being used by oneself as a resource. The key difference being the transaction or transubstantiation of

emotions between agents. In consideration of both emotional intelligence and emotional competency, Gendron (2004) defines emotional capital as "…the set of resources (emotional competencies) that inhere to the person useful for his or her cognitive, personal, social and economic development" (p.9). This definition presents a similar problem to that highlighted for 'motivation', in that it suggests that the emotional resources are personal and exist essentially or permanently in the individual who learns and develops them. To take this idea further emotional resources are to be understood, in the Bourdieusian sense of capital, as an asset that can be transferred amongst agents through transactions within a field.

Emotional capital appears to be a function of social capital where capital exchange relies heavily on the relationship that exits between agents (Reay, 2000). However, Nowotny's (1981) suggests that emotional capital is a 'variant' of social capital and may be categorised as a form of capital in its own right due to being "characteristic of the private, rather than public sphere" (cited in Reay, 2004, p.60). Reay (2004) suggests that "emotional capital is generally confined within the bounds of affective relationships… [with] those you care about" (p.60). Drawing on both Nowotny (1981) and Reay (2004) it may be suggested that the key difference between social and emotional capital lies within the strength of the relationship between agents. If a strong relationship exists then emotional resources may be exchanged (Ahmed, 2004).

Although accepting 'emotional capital' as a form of 'capital' in its own right, Gendron (2004) also suggests that emotional capital is a 'booster capital' that can be used for 'potentializing or energyzing the human, social and cultural capitals'. This is an interesting idea as it helps us to understand how emotional capital may be of value in educational settings as a catalyst or amplifier of other forms of capital exchange, the obvious transaction being that of cultural capital between teacher and student, where emotional 'resources' are used between the teacher and student to support the learning process. In order to further unpack the notion of emotional capital, Allatt (1993, cited in Reay, 2000) defines it as 'emotionally valued assets and skills, love and affection, expenditure of time, attention, care and concern'. Reay (2000) calls these a 'stock of emotional

resources' (p.572). Gendron (2004) reinforces Reay's (2000) notion of a 'stock of emotional resources' through his concept of 'emotional competencies' and defining these as "…the result of "a production" of diverse educational contexts and situations, as they are acquired by learning, and therefore can be improved or enhance[d]" (p.11). The idea of emotional competencies, that result from a 'production' of situations, and acquired by learning gives credence to the concept of emotions as resources as they can be acquired through a process, in this instance, learning. Reay's research into this subject (emotional capital) is primarily based around the exploration of the class and gender processes associated with parental involvement in education, namely, a mother's emotional engagement in her child's primary education. The link to Allatt's emotional resources here appears obvious, if only due to the perceived emotional bond between a mother and child during the child's primary years. Hutchison (2012) expands on Reay's study of the emotional investment between a mother and her child through use of the term 'invisible labour' (p.195). She explains that often, in discourses of education, activities such as the completion of homework are seen as 'the product of the child's self-discipline'. Hutchison explains that the work of the mother in the 'generation of educational privilege', for this example (homework) is 'rendered invisible' (p.198). The issue of invisibility or non-recognition of the capital investment here may be explained by the perceived potential difficulty associated with converting one form of capital into another and for these conversions to be identified as capital transactions. Particularly when converting a form of capital into cultural capital. Hutchison (2012) explains that;

> "it is not always straightforward to convert one form of capital readily into another form of cultural capital, such as the academic success promised by homework. Bourdieu attests that it is within the family that the important transmission of cultural capital occurs, and that academic achievement… relies on family reserves of cultural capital" (p.197-198)

Hutchison (2012) calls this form of cultural capital 'familial cultural capital' and identifies the emotional capital investment in this transaction as 'family dispositions', 'material resources' and 'the mother's free time'. Of interest though,

is whether or not these emotional resources, are available to teachers within classrooms. Bringing together Gendron's, Allat's and Hutchison's ideas, that is, the use of emotional resources (expenditure of time, care and concern, etc.) to enhance or 'boost' the exchange of cultural capital during a teaching and learning experience, may provide the basis for a flexible conceptual framework for understanding emotional capital transactions within the classroom. The TRLP (2008) commentary report 'challenge and change in further education' reflects on the work of Jephcote and Salisbury (2007) stating;

> "Teachers established nurturing relationships, chased up missing students via texts and telephone calls. They generally felt that the emotional labour they undertook, although draining, was part of being an FE professional." (p.14)

There is a recognition of the emotional investment of teachers in this statement, which provides a starting point for discussion of emotional capital transactions between teachers and learners.

Habitus

Central to all Bourdieu's conceptual tools is his idea of *habitus*. Webb *et al* (2008) defines *habitus* as:

> "A concept that expresses, on the one hand, the way in which individuals 'become themselves' – develop attitudes and dispositions – and, on the other hand, the ways in which those individuals engage in practices."   (p. xiii)

A sporting *habitus*, therefore, disposes the individual athlete to activities, perspectives and practices that express the 'culturally and historically constituted values' of that particular sporting field (Webb *et al*, 2008). Therefore, *habitus* can be understood as the values and dispositions that transcend generations and context due to being 'durable and transposable'. This idea brings about a strong sense of culture and history and how values are assimilated by individuals who in turn re-produce these values within the various fields they interact with. *Habitus* then, is both within and external to the individual. Webb *et al* (2008) point out three key considerations of *habitus*; firstly, knowledge is

constructed through the *habitus* as opposed to merely being 'passively recorded'. Secondly, all individuals have 'cultural trajectories' that dispose them to certain attitudes, values and behaviours. Thirdly, the *habitus* is 'constituted in moments of practice', always in the present, and emerges where dispositions meet problems, choices or context (p.38). Webb *et al* (2008) also add that *habitus* is 'partly unconscious' and 'entirely arbitrary' and explains these ideas through an example of western meat-eating patterns, stating;

> "Cows, pigs, chickens, ducks, turkeys and sheep are all slaughtered, packaged and consumed as staple components of a western diet, while domestic animals such as cats, dogs and hamsters are (unconsciously) excluded from this category… it is proper to eat some animals because they are 'depersonalised'… we often reinforce this act of depersonalization by naming the meat differently from the animal (we eat beef, not cow)." (p.39)

There is an evident link here to Foucauldian discourse analysis (Powers, 2007) where society (and the various power relationships within it) is being shaped by the use of language. However, I feel that Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* is a more complete tool that considers thoughts, feelings, and dispositions in a more holistic way without possibly marginalizing any influencing factor through specifically focusing on, for instance, language.

Reflecting further on Webb *et al's* (2008) example (western meat-eating patterns) there are individuals who have, through their own cultural trajectory decided to become vegetarian or vegan. They may care for farm animals in a similar way as they would domestic animals, where the use of language and societal commonality (in favour of slaughtering, packaging and consuming meat) has not resulted in their positive disposition towards meat-eating. Therefore *habitus* allows for improvisations that are determined by 'where and who' the individual 'has been in a culture' (p.44).

It is important to reiterate at this point that my study focuses on learning motivation during a learner's transition into FE, the potential power relationships that may exist within the educational field, and how capital

resources, including emotional resources, may be exchanged between agents to enhance learning motivation. Bourdieu's 'conceptual triad' (Rawolle and Lingard, 2008), and in particular 'capital', will be the guiding concepts. Other Bourdieusian concepts such as '*doxa*' (Bourdieu, 1984) may appear relevant to this study, particularly when discussing one's sense of place. However, whilst acknowledging the concept of *doxa* as a potentially useful concept, I believe Bourdieu's conceptual triad provides a full framework for my specific lines of inquiry. *Doxa* and other Bourdieusian concepts, along with Foucauldian and Habermasion concepts, will therefore not be used within this thesis. This is primarily due to the constraints of space and the avoidance of an overly complex conceptual framework that may dominate my research instead of providing a useful tool-set in which to make sense of my findings.

Chapter Summary

In summarising this chapter and in reference to the three subsections, firstly, it is apparent that the terms 'learning' and 'motivation' (both key words within this study) can have multiple meanings and uses. The definition of motivation to be used in this study will be 'a construct that is used to explain the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of an individual's behaviour when engaging in a particular situation or task, or towards fulfilment of a particular need'. This working definition helps to further shape the perspective from which this study is being conducted and give further clarity to the research questions presented in Chapter One (p.13). It is evident from the working definition and preceding literature review that both terms are extremely complex and can be influenced by many variables. This complexity has shaped the data collection and research methods presented in Chapter Three.

Secondly, studies that focused directly on learning cultures as a means of understanding learners motivation to learn are both limited in number and limiting in scope with only the TLC project (and the supporting publications) that consider learning cultures in their entirety and from a holistic perspective. Therefore the TLC project and its supporting publications will be used as one of the main bodies of literature to support my thesis.

Finally, it is evident that Bourdieu's conceptual 'thinking tools' are extremely useful in providing a structure to analytic thinking in order to help the researcher make sense of power relationships within education. His [Bourdieu] concepts of field, capital and *habitus* will be used as 'tools' throughout my own research. I emphasise the term 'tool' as I do not intend to become constrained in trying to fit emerging ideas and themes into Bourdieu's framework; instead his concepts will merely be used to try and make sense of that which is difficult to make sense of and bring clarity and direction to that which is unclear and directionless. Reay (2000) quotes Bourdieu and Waquant (1992) in further explaining the flexibility of Bourdieu's conceptual tools;

> "The peculiar difficulty of a sociology, … is to produce a precise science of an imprecise, fuzzy, woolly reality. For this it is better that its concepts be polymorphic, supple and adaptable, rather than defined, calibrated and used rigidly." (p.23).

Following Bourdieu's, and indeed Reay's approach, the notion of 'capital' and 'emotional capital' will be used as a guiding concept in trying to make sense of the 'use' of emotions in educational fields.

Endnotes

1. TLRP was a large scale UK educational research programme managed by the Economic and Social Research Council that focussed on teaching and learning research projects from 1999-2009. Further details, aims, findings, and publications can be found on the dedicated TLRP website http://www.tlrp.org/index.html

Chapter Three

Methodology and Research Approach

Introduction

This chapter will begin through stating the purpose of research and the associated research questions. I feel that this is necessary to set the context of the subsequent paragraphs and sections/subsections. Following this a brief rationale of the research approach and research traditions used will be discussed. Following on, discussion of the research design, research sample and research site will 'set the scene' with regards to the data collection process and choice of methods and methodology. The chapter will then move to detailed discussion of the data collection methods, and how the data was organized, analysed, and synthesized. Finally, the chapter will discuss ethical considerations relating to the study, issues relating to trustworthiness, and limitations to the research study, prior to concluding via a chapter summary.

Purpose of research

The purpose of this study is to explore student motivation within the Further Education vocational sector with specific emphasis on why students do/do not achieve as highly as expected. The information gathered during this research can be used to formulate appropriate strategies and interventions that can be implemented in order to improve learning motivation and resultant learning outcomes within vocational programmes at institutional level.

Research questions

In order to 'shed light' on the problem the following research questions were developed in relation to the purpose of this research project and consideration of the foreshadowed problems:

1. Why do learners within post-compulsory education studying vocational courses at Mid-town College have a perceived lack of motivation to

achieve the level of progress expected as indicated through low value

added scores?

2. Can Bourdieu's concepts, specifically 'capital', 'field' and *habitus*' be used

as theoretical and conceptual tools to understand the learners' life

courses and help explain their motivation and orientation to learning?

3. What can be learned (teachers, managers, policy makers) about learning

motivation through completing this study?

Supporting Questions: In addition to the above research questions a number of
'supporting questions' were explored within this study.

Supporting Questions (*policy*)

1. What national and local policy drivers influence learning motivation
    within Mid-town College, and in what way?

2. How is educational policy interpreted and enacted by teaching staff?

Supporting Questions (*student motivation*)

3. What factors (past and present) do participants perceive to have affected
    their progress in studying in FE?

4. What did/do participants perceive to be their main motivators for
    completing past and present study?

5. What did participants perceive to be the key differences between
    compulsory and post compulsory education and how these differences
    may have accounted for their differing levels of achievement in FE?

Rationale for use of a qualitative research approach

Why a qualitative mode of inquiry? **-** The focus of my study was to understand

what motivates learners to achieve in order to ascertain strategies that can be

implemented to improve learner motivation and resultant learning outcomes. In

order to gain this information it was essential to establish a good rapport with

the respondents so that they 'opened up' and offered information, while at the

same time felt that they were being supported and that their experiences were respected. As an individual's personal motivations to achieve may be a sensitive area, a good rapport along with trust and confidentiality must be established. I believe the best way to obtain the required feedback whilst maintaining this rapport was through an honest and open interviewing process. This process of gaining information follows a qualitative mode of inquiry.

Locke (1989) suggests that qualitative research is;

> "A systematic empirical strategy for answering questions about people in a bounded social context. Given any group, role, community or locus for human interaction. It is a way to define and answer the primordial question 'what is going on here?'" (p.5)

This may seem true to all types of research, however what differentiates qualitative from quantitative research is the methods used by the researcher in order to gain their data, and the assumptions that are held by the researcher. It is the assumptions that most clearly emphasise the 'non-conventional' nature of qualitative research (Dunstan, 1996). Gaining data through a series of focused interviews appears to be the most suitable approach when dealing with complex topics such as motivation. The importance of the researcher to the credibility, dependability and transferability of this research study is discussed later in this chapter.

Rationale for the qualitative tradition used

Why critical policy analysis? – Regarding educational policy analysis Marlen and Knapp (1997) state the following;

> "Policy analysts and actors often struggle to 'make sense' of perplexing policy developments such as the seemingly tenuous connections between policy and practice. The stark and stubborn disparities between a policy's stated aims and actual effects seem to defy explanation in part because the social conditions to be attended are tangled webs of problems with symptoms, sources, and 'solutions' that are neither readily apparent nor reliably addressed by policy provisions. These disparities also resist explanation because policy is an elusive, multi-faceted phenomenon." (p.419)

Marlen and Knapp also suggest that critical policy analysis can provide a way to think about education 'policy puzzles' when exploring 'policy-practice connections'. This idea of educational policy being an 'elusive, perplexing, multi-faceted puzzle' is reason enough for an in-depth critical analysis and is the primary reason why educational policy should be critically analysed at varying levels (macro, meso, micro) in order to explore the differences in interpretation between each level of policy and what may be a 'stark and stubborn' disparity between national policy and policy enactments in college. In light of this multi-tier investigation of the policies that influence learning motivation, a single methodological approach is not appropriate. I have avoided following public policy analysis approaches that focus on analysis *for* policy and instead have approached this area of research with the focus on analysis *of* policy. The key difference is that the purpose of the policy analysis (within this thesis) is not to recommend alternative policy or policy amendment, it is simply to understand the context of the policy surrounding education and educational outcomes, how it may be reinterpreted at macro, meso and micro levels, and how all of this may influence an institution's approach to improving learning motivation and learning outcomes. To avoid being 'drawn in' to the complex and convoluted debate of critical policy methodologies I have implemented a case study approach where the college site is the case in study and the key methods used included creating a timeline and mapping (through desk based document analysis) the key influences, and the stakeholders, to critical moments of change within the college. The result of this analysis helped set the context of this thesis within section 1.1 of Chapter One.

Why Case Study? - Case study as a methodological approach can involve exploratory studies of real life issues and problems within specific contexts. Reviewing the purpose of this research, this form of inquiry appears to be well suited, particularly as the study is exploratory in nature. This is reinforced by Yin (2003) who defines the case study research approach as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident." (p.23). A case study approach will allow detailed exploration of a particular 'case

in study' (BTEC National Diploma Public Service courses at Mid-town College).

Merriam (1998) describes it,

> "A case study design is employed to gain an in depth
> understanding of the situation and the meaning for those
> involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in
> context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than
> confirmation. Insights gleaned from case studies can directly
> influence policy, practice and future research." (p.19)

Case Study is a focused description, examination and analysis of a particular phenomenon bounded by time and/or place (Berg, 2004; Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). The use of Case Study within the scope of this research project, involves focused detailed accounts of the setting of Mid-town College (the classroom) and the participants (vocational service sector learners). Multiple cases were studied and the data collected was analysed thematically using a form of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). I state a 'form of' grounded theory here as the approach I have taken during thematic analysis is not true grounded theory in the way that Strauss and Corbin (1990) map out as a set of procedure and techniques. This will be explored later in this chapter when discussing grounded theory in more detail.

My study fits well with Merriam's description because it seeks to understand why learners within post-compulsory education, particularly those on vocational courses have a perceived lack of motivation to achieve.

Case study research is not without its critics. Stuart *et al* (2002) criticizes case studies for their labour intensive data collection methods, such as interviews and the time required to carry out the research. Patton and Applebaum (2003) criticize case studies for being difficult to generalise. Gummesson (2006) critiques case studies for their reliability and the impact of 'interviewer's effects'. In his (2006) paper; 'Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research', Flyvberg examines five critical perspectives (he calls them common misunderstandings). These are:

1. General, theoretical knowledge is more valuable than concrete, practical knowledge.
2. One cannot generalize from a single case, therefore, the single case study cannot contribute to scientific development.
3. The case study is most useful for generating hypotheses, whereas other methods are more suitable for hypothesis testing and theory building.
4. The case study contains a bias towards verification.
5. It is often difficult to summarize specific case studies. (p.221)

Flyvberg challenges the arguments against the case study head on. He questions the 'ideals' of critics, particularly those who highlight the difficulty in 'generalizing' and 'summarizing' case study research, and hence its 'usefulness' and 'validity' when applying to 'broader classes', through turning the critique on itself and stating that rich data that is 'hard-to-summarize' and generalize is 'not a problem', and, questions whether 'summarizing and generalizing' is 'always desirable' (p.237). The following paragraphs detail my defense of the case study approach in consideration of the 'common misunderstandings' identified by Flyvberg, and in particular in the application of the case study approach to small sample research.

First common misunderstanding: General theoretical knowledge is more valuable than concrete, practical knowledge – Flyvberg aims to address this misunderstanding through presenting his view of the role of cases and theory in learning. Firstly, he identifies the 'context dependent' knowledge acquired through higher level learning to be 'necessary' in developing individuals from 'rule-based beginners' to 'virtuoso experts', thus emphasizing the need for specific, narrow-focused learning required for subject mastery. Secondly, he suggests that within the study of 'human affairs' only 'context-dependent knowledge' exists, thus ruling out theoretical construction. A key term here is 'theoretical construction', where Flyvberg suggests that predictive theory developed through theoretical construction 'does not and probably cannot exist …in social science' (2006, p.223). Drawing on both points, it may be suggested that within the context of human learning, the knowledge and understanding of context-dependent cases facilitates an individual developing beyond the 'beginner's level' and towards a higher level of expertise often associated with postgraduate research. Flyvberg states; "Common to all experts, however, is that

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they operate on the basis of intimate knowledge of several thousand concrete cases in their areas of expertise" (2006, p.222). Furthermore, Flyvberg argues that '…such knowledge and expertise also lie at the center of the case study as a research method' (p.222). In reflection of this it appears entirely appropriate to use the case study approach in order to better understand a complex phenomenon such as one's motivation towards learning. It is Flyvberg's revision of the first common misunderstanding of case study research that brings clarity to this section:

> "Predictive theories and universals cannot be found in the study of human affairs. Concrete, context-dependent knowledge is, therefore, more valuable than the vain search for predictive theories and universals." (2006, p.224)

Whilst generalization has its place in learning and therefore research, focused and context-dependent knowledge facilitates a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Both general and context-dependent knowledge are therefore useful, and approaches that bring about this knowledge may also be deemed useful.

Second common misunderstanding: one cannot generalize from a single case, therefore, the single case study cannot contribute to scientific development – In tackling this misunderstanding, Flyvberg (2006) draws on past empirical research where single case study research has led to the disproval of, at that time, widely accepted conceptual thinking. He used the example of Galileo's rejection of Aristotle's law of gravity, where Aristotle's view of gravity that 'dominated scientific inquiry for nearly 2,000 years' (p.225) was falsified by Galileo through a single practical experiment. Flyvberg explains that Galileo's experiment (dropping objects of varying masses from the leaning tower of Pisa) 'did not involve a large random sample of trials of objects falling from a wide range of randomly selected heights under varying wind conditions' (p.225). Instead it was a single case that 'settled the argument' due to one carefully chosen experiment. This suggests that if the case or experiment is well constructed then the findings of the case study may have greater credibility. To further cement the validity of the single case approach, Flyvberg draws on the work of Popper (1959) and his idea of 'falsification', that is, if one observation

does not fit with a proposition, the proposition is not valid and must therefore be rejected. To explain this Popper used the example proposition that 'all swans are white'. He explained that a single observation of a black swan would falsify the proposition and lead to theory revision or rejection. In this example, a single case study has credibility thus suggesting that all case studies are useful with regards to what may be learned through conducting them. I am not suggesting here that the case study approach is only useful and credible when 'finding black swans', I am highlighting how a single case can progress empirical thinking and that the single case study is not a weak approach just because it is not generalizable. Again, Flyvberg corrects this common misunderstanding, stating;

> "One can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization as supplement or alternative to other methods. But formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas 'the force of example' is underestimated." (2006, p.228)

Thomas (2011) further argues for the use of the case study in terms of its perceived lack of generalizability through focusing on the differences between phronesis and theory when forming knowledge. He suggests that case study research, if considered through phronesis, can lead to 'exemplary knowledge' (p.31). Thomas states that 'exemplary knowledge' is the "example *viewed and heard* in the context of another's experience, but used in the context of one's own" (P.31). It is not an exemplar of, or model knowledge as the term suggests, nor is it taken to be 'representative, typical or standard'. Thomas suggests that exemplary knowledge is;

> "taken to be a particular representation given in context of one's own experience – in the context, in other words, of one's phronesis, rather than one's theory." (p.31)

Thomas proceeds to note that exemplary knowledge is 'malleable and interpretable in the context of experience' and thus offers an example through which one's phronesis enables insight into and understanding of a problem (p.31). Thomas concludes that we should not seek to validate the case study through generalizability, that is, through 'reference to a body of theory or generalized knowledge' but through making connections to another's experiences and insights. He states that to argue to seek generalizable

knowledge in all forms of inquiry is to miss the point about what may be offered by particular kinds of inquiry. A case study presents an ideal opportunity for the development of knowledge through phronesis and therefore should be judged within this context, that is, through the value it offers to one's understanding (p.33).

Bassey (2001) proposes a potential solution to the problem of generalization in educational research through exploring different types of generalization, and in particular 'fuzzy generalisation'. He states that the study of 'single events' within the educational field is often more valuable than searching for generalisations. He called the single events 'singularities', stating;

> "I also stressed the value of relatability, arguing that the merit of a study of singularities lies in the extent to which teachers reading the report of the study can relate it to their own teaching... there were no empirical generalisations of use to teachers." (p.5)

Within a complex social arena such as an educational setting, with a multitude of variables that are in constant flux, scientific generalization is problematic. Bassey (2001) challenges the use of scientific generalization and its usefulness to teachers and proposes an alternative form in 'fuzzy generalisation'. The distinction between scientific generalization and fuzzy generalization being the way they are expressed, e.g., scientific generalization is expressed in the form: 'particular events *do* lead to particular consequences'; while the fuzzy generalization is expressed: 'particular events *may* lead to particular consequences' (p.6). Bassey argues that single cases can be generalizable and reflects on his own research in chemistry and the study of a chemical compound, '...anyone, anytime, anywhere, who treats the same ingredients in the same way that I did, will make the same chemical compound' (p.6). This 'open generalisation' was based on a single case and Bassey argues that within the 'positivist paradigm of physical science this was, and is, acceptable'. The key point here is that singularities (or single cases) are empirically credible for scientific generalization in this context (chemistry) and if scientific generalization is 'but one form of empirical generalisation', other forms such as fuzzy generalization may best serve in the context of the social sciences.

Third common misunderstanding: the case study is most useful for generating hypotheses, whereas other methods are more suitable for hypothesis testing and theory building – This common misunderstanding is derived from the second common misunderstanding that 'one cannot generalize on the basis of individual cases'. Therefore, to disprove this misunderstanding is to justify the use of the case study throughout the full research process. Flyvberg has corrected this misunderstanding, stating "The case study is useful for both generating and testing hypotheses but is not limited to these research activities alone" (2006, p.229). Flyvberg's correction draws on the work of Eckstein (1975) suggesting that case studies are valuable at all stages of the research process though are most valuable when testing hypotheses and that the value is increased through careful case selection. Flyvberg uses an extreme example to explain this point. He discusses the single case experiment and the 'strategic selection' of lead and a feather as materials to be used to test if different objects fall with equal velocity. His rationale for this strategic selection being, "If it is valid for this case, it is valid for all (or many) cases" (p.230). Flyvberg calls this selective approach 'a generalization of the sort'. He suggests looking for the 'most likely' or 'least likely' cases when attempting to confirm or falsify propositions, where cases of the 'most likely' type are best for falsification of propositions and 'least likely' are more suitable to tests of verification. However, finding a black swan farm may be extremely difficult if not impossible and 'researcher intuition' plays an important role in the identification of these 'critical cases'.

Fourth common misunderstanding: the case study contains a bias towards verification – Bacon (1953, cited in Flyvberg, 2006) states that; "It is the peculiar and perpetual error of the human understanding to be more moved and excited by affirmatives than negatives" (p.231). He explains that this is a 'fundamental problem', which 'all researchers must deal with'. It seems plausible that if there is a tendency for humans to be 'moved and excited' by 'affirmatives' that this would be true of all types of research. Flyvberg suggests that the issue is heightened with case study research as the qualitative methods used 'allow for more room for the researcher's subjective and arbitrary judgement than other methods' (p.231). Again, it may be argued that 'arbitrary subjectivism' applies to

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all methods of data collection, for example, the researcher will set the categories and questions for use in large-scale quantitative investigations. Flyvberg seeks to correct the misunderstanding, stating;

> "The case study contains no greater bias towards verification of the researcher's preconceived notions than other methods of inquiry. On the contrary, experience indicates that the case study contains a greater bias toward falsification of preconceived notions than toward verification." (p.232)

Fifth common misunderstanding: it is often difficult to summarize specific case studies – Whilst this misunderstanding may be true, the question to ask oneself is 'should case studies be summarized?' and also 'what value does summarization bring to the research process within the context of case studies?' In answering these questions Flyvberg's (2006) view of the value of 'breadth' and 'depth' within research is helpful;

> "The advantage of large samples is breadth, while their problem is one of depth. For the case study, the situation is the reverse. Both approaches are necessary for a sound development of social science." (p.235)

Summarization therefore could be problematic or even counterproductive within case study research as the 'advantage' of 'depth', that is, the rich and detailed accounts that are captured, often as narratives, may be lost. Therefore I propose the following answers; case studies should not be summarized due to the loss of richness of detail and subsequent value of the data in terms of its depth; I suggest that summarization of the findings of case study research adds little value, particularly if attempting to summarize narratives. Flyberg seeks to correct the misunderstanding, stating;

> "It is correct that summarizing case studies is often difficult, especially as concerns case process… The problems in summarizing case studies, however, are due more often to the properties of the reality studied than to the case study as a research method. Often it is not desirable to summarize and generalize case studies. Good studies should be read as narratives in their entirety." (2006, p.234)

I believe the case study approach provides a rich and detailed account of learning motivation and provides insight into this complex issue whilst avoiding the dilution of its meaning to fit common generalization. However, I do appreciate

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the dangers of not considering the aforementioned 'misunderstandings' in developing the trustworthiness of my research. The development of ideas, through constant comparison and thematic analysis with a group of participants provided an opportunity for the realization of themes without the constraints/limitations of 'generalization'. I also believe there is value to accumulative knowledge, knowledge that builds on existing understandings of a subject or provides an alternative perspective. The use of case studies provides opportunities to add specific accumulative knowledge whilst avoiding generalization through repetition.

To further justify why I have chosen a case study approach I must state at this point why I have deselected other approaches. An obvious choice for my study would have been action research, where my dual role as researcher/manager would have facilitated intervention in an attempt to tackle the problem of low learner achievement and perceived lack of learning motivation. However, it was the very issue surrounding the dual role that I needed to give careful consideration in designing this study. My role as a manager presented various problems associated with insider research that I had to overcome to heighten the trustworthiness of the data collection process. Throughout this study I implemented strategies in an attempt to minimize the impact of the manager/researcher relationship, including reassuring lecturers and middle managers that I would take steps to separate my management and researcher roles and where possible not act as a manager on the information received as a researcher. I felt that an action research approach would have hindered the data collection process with college staff as there would have been an understanding that the information passed, and activities observed may have resulted in direct intervention. The case study approach used went some way towards mitigating these anxieties. This issue is discussed further in the ethics section of this chapter.

In addition, the difficulty in balancing a full-time management role with the requirements of completing doctoral level study led me to believe that the case study approach best fit my own situation and time availability.

Why an adapted form of life course research? – The life course research approach brings a developmental perspective to issues that had been conceived in terms of 'cross-sectional slices of life' (Colby, 1998). Life course research considers the whole picture, the 'groundwork laid earlier in life and the outcomes to emerge later' (p.viii). Giele and Elder reinforce this through stating "any point in the life span must be viewed dynamically as the consequence of past experience and future expectation" (1998, p.19). This holistic approach considers the importance of the interconnected relationship between individual and social change and the mutual influence of both on one another (Colby, 1998; Mortimer and Shanahan, 2003). When exploring learning motivation, life course research allowed past experiences and future goals and expectations to be considered and informed the discussion and analysis of the data collected in this present window of the learners lives. Although there are elements of life course research evident within this approach, it cannot be called pure 'life course', this is mainly due to the length of time given to the interviewing of participants to allow them to have 'space' to discuss their life course. It was intended at the start of my study to interview participants over one-hour sessions or longer, however, due to the limited time that learners had between their classes at college, this was not possible. Therefore the life course approach used is an adapted approach to fit the limitations presented through limited access to participants. However, even though an adapted model was used, the nature of understanding critical moments in a participant's life course and how these have shaped their positions and dispositions and therefore, influenced their decision making and learner/learning motivations, presents a life course approach theme and justifies my use of the term within this thesis.

Philosophical, ontological and epistemological perspectives

Philosophical - Boyd (1993) explored what constitutes science and research in her study of 'the general perspective of phenomenological philosophy'. She states that she 'focuses on phenomena as they appear' and that 'reality is subjective'. This provides a philosophical perspective which she reinforces with the use of two key philosophical statements:

1. 'Subjectivity means that the world becomes real through our contact with it and acquires meaning through our interpretations of that contact'.

2. 'Truth… is a composite of realities, and access to truth is a problem of access to human subjectivity' (P.1).

Although I have considered the philosophical foundations of my research through use of Boyd's two key philosophical statements, I do not agree with her second statement regarding truth. Firstly, I personally believe that accessing the truth is impossible and should not be looked upon as a problem that can be solved through the understanding of human subjectivity. Secondly, I do not *fully* accept the notion that truth is a 'composite of realities' as this would be biased towards a 'consensus' definition of truth where truth becomes more probable through agreement and consensus. This perspective, I would argue, limits individual subjectivity where one's own understanding and interpretation of the truth of reality may be compromised to fit with the majority. This is reinforced by Schwandt (2000), who may argue that I am following philosophical hermeneutics as my epistemological approach who states:

> "…philosophical hermeneutics challenges the ['this' in original text] classic epistemological picture of the interpretivist task …Philosophical hermeneutics argues that understanding is not in the first instance, a procedure- or rule-governed undertaking; rather it is a very condition of being human. Understanding *is* interpretation." (p.194)

It is Schwandt's objection (when discussing philosophical hermeneutics) to rules and protocol when interpreting the truth that resonates with my own philosophical perspective ('truth' and 'reality' being individualised and subjective). With qualitative research reality is proposed through understanding human participants' perspectives, thus giving opportunity for the realisation of multiple realities that are entwined within the field that is being explored. Using Bourdieu's conceptual tools (capital, field, and *habitus*) helps me to overcome the agent versus structure dualism that is at play here and work with the multiple realities that I have recorded during the data collection process. Based on this

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understanding, the context of both time and space, e.g. time, date and location of interviews conducted, along with the economical, sociological, political and educational fields that frame this study are important.

Ontological - When considering the ontological foundations of my study I agree with the following statement from Kincheloe and Tobin (2006):

> "...to be a critical researcher that takes the complexity of the lived world into account, we have to study the world 'in context.' ...we have to search for the interrelationships and contexts that give knowledge meaning while avoiding reliance upon decontextualized study." (p.5)

When searching for the probable truth within my study my ontological perspective is similar to that stated above, that is, I do not believe pure objectivity is possible when completing research. We have to study the world in context, or, for this study, the learners and teachers in context. In order to do this I have used the conceptual tools of Bourdieu (capital, field, *habitus*) as detailed in chapter two. The work of Bourdieu supports my own view of unachievable objectivity, and, supports the notion that 'everything is because of everything', an entwined and entangled ever-changing collection of fields, that is, in the Bourdieusian sense. Kincheloe and Tobin (2006) adds further clarity to my own thoughts through the use of the term 'relationship', they state:

> "Operating in the ontological realm educational researchers understand that to be in the world is to operate in context, in relation to other entities. Western Cartesian science has traditionally seen the basic building blocks of the universe as things-in-themselves. What much recent research in physics, biology, social science, the humanities, and cognitive science has posited involves the idea that relationships not things-in-themselves are the most basic properties of things in the world. In the ontological realm this would include human beings themselves. To *be* in the world is to be in relationship. People are not abstract individuals who live as fragments, in isolation from one another." (p.5-6)

It is the term 'relationship' that reinforces my own understanding of Bourdieusian 'fields' and provides an added layer of clarity where the focus

is on the interface or 'relationship' between 'entities' as opposed to the entities themselves.

Epistemological - In stating my epistemological stance I fall within the broad category of constructivism, though to take this a step further I will draw from the work of Kincheloe (2005) who has used the term 'critical constructivism' to denote his epistemological perspective, he states:

> "An epistemology of constructivism has maintained that nothing represents a neutral perspective, in the process shaking the epistemological foundations of modernist Cartesian grand narratives. Indeed, no truly objective way of seeing exists. Nothing exists before consciousness shapes it into something we can perceive. What appears as objective reality is merely what our mind constructs, what we are accustomed to seeing. The knowledge that the world yields has to be interpreted by men and women who are part of that world… the structures and phenomena we observe in the physical world are nothing more than creations of our measuring and categorizing mind." (p.9)

In addition, Kincheloe (2005) suggests that a critical constructivist epistemology forces educational researchers to ask:

- Does much of the research conducted in the field of education simply reflect the context, values, and assumptions of researchers?

- In light of such constructions, what is really meant by the term objectivity?

- By what processes are our constructions of the world shaped?

- Are our psychosocial dispositions beyond our conscious control?

- Do we simply surrender our perceptions to the determinations of our environment, and our social, cultural context?

- What does this process of construction have to do with the education of pedagogical researchers? (p.9)

It is the idea that 'nothing exists before consciousness shapes it' into something and 'the structures and phenomena we observe in the physical world are nothing

more than creations of our measuring and categorizing mind' that bring together both my philosophical and epistemological perspectives.

If I were to crystallise the philosophical, ontological and epistemological foundations of my research into set categories I would look to my own researcher positionality. The foundations of my research are constructed through my own subjectivity, preferences, experiences, opportunities, and therefore, I would declare the epistemological foundations of my study as critical constructivism. I also see links to Schwandt's view of philosophical hermeneutics where understanding is subjective to individuals and not a set of rules or protocols. The ontological and philosophical foundations of my research draw from Bourdieusian influences to bring about a worldview perspective that rejects purest objectivity and mass (or consensus) reality and focuses on relationism, that is, the relationships between entities and the importance of context to fully understand the findings of my research.

Research Design: As stated in chapter one, this study has three key strands. These are outlined as follows:

Strand 1 - The first strand of this study uses policy analysis, a desk based interrogation of educational policy literature to examine the construction, interpretation and re-interpretation of key education drivers across macro (national), meso and micro levels. This strand also analyses policy discourses within the FE sector in order to set in context the foreshadowed problems discussed earlier in Chapter One (p.10-12). The first strand of this study was completed at the outset in order to set the context for the thesis.

Stand 2 - The second strand of study is an analysis of learners' life stories and how their experiences to date may impact their motivation to learn. Semi-structured interviews with ten (later reduced to nine) public services students from a single BTEC National Diploma cohort were used as the primary method of data collection for this strand of study. The data collected from a number of interviews with each participant were used to create partial life stories. These

were analysed using Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of 'capital', *habitus* and 'field' using a form of life course research.

Strand 3 - The final strand of this study examines what is going on in practice within classroom sessions to improve learning outcomes. Classroom observations of teaching and learning practice followed by focus groups with the learners who were participants in this study formed the third strand of study into what is going on in practice. The data collected during the lesson observations were used to guide the discussion during the focus groups that followed. An example of the lesson observation data collection form is presented in Appendix G.

Capturing the Context

In order to set my study in context (with regards to time and space) the following methods were used:

Event mapping - the maintenance of a chronological timeline of key events that have had an impact upon educational policy making and subsequent impact on this research study. E.g. the formation of the Coalition Government and new political agenda, the announcement and implementation of education funding cuts, the Wolf Report, the new CIF (common inspection framework), etc.

Background and context analysis – analysis of the context of the research and the background of the organisation where the research is taking place, its structure, its past history and future strategic plan, provides the space/time context. This information is detailed in the 'college story' and 'setting the scene' sections of Chapter One (p.22 and 28).

Researcher positionality - As it is impossible to take the researcher out of any study (Wellington *et al*, 2005) it is imperative that my own 'positionality' within research is defined. The researcher positionality section of Chapter One (p.17) along with the philosophical, ontological and epistemological section of this Chapter (three) presents a detailed insight into my own researcher positionality.

Research Sample

Study Sample –The second category relevant to the second strand (life course research approach) included nine (originally ten) learners from the BTEC National Diploma Public Services cohort (BNDPS). This sample was followed over their two year period of their programme. It was initially planned that participants were to be selected to take part in the study due to falling into one of the following three categories (three within each);

1) a BTEC National Diploma student who had applied for A-levels, did not get the grades needed and started a BTEC programme;

2) a BTEC National Diploma student who did get the grades to start A-level study though decided to take the BTEC route;

3) a BTEC National Diploma student who has progressed from the BTEC First Diploma Public Services (level 2) programme due to not achieving the entry criteria to start the BTEC National Diploma (level 3) the previous year.

However, the cohort profile did not fit with these categories leading to a need to revise the categories. This is discussed later in this chapter.

The third category relevant to the final strand of study included the National Diploma Year 2 Red cohort at Mid-town College and the programme team responsible for teaching and personal tutoring. The programme team consists of the Programme Leader, three full time establishment Lecturers, one of whom is the Personal Tutor to this cohort, and a small number of part time hourly paid Lecturers (confirmed at September 2010 enrolment and induction).

How did I gain access to the participants? – The aforementioned student cohort (BNDPS), Teachers (Sports and Public Services Department), and Curriculum Managers (Faculty of Service Sectors) within Mid-town College formed the main body of participants within this study. I gained access to these participants as a member of the college with personal contacts (teachers, middle and senior managers at Mid-town College) and approaching students from the Sports and Public Services Department. Cohen *et al* (2011) suggest that the quality of a research project depends as much on the suitability of the sampling strategy as

the methodology and instrumentation used. As my study is contextual to FE students, teachers and middle and senior managers at Mid-town College, the population pool from which to sample is both limited in number and purposive (a non-probability sample). The form of sampling that has been selected for use within this contextual population is 'convenience sampling'. Cohen *et al*, (2011) suggests that convenience sampling involves selecting the nearest or easiest individuals that fall within the contextual constraints and continue until the study size is obtained. As I have easy access to participants through my personal involvement with Mid-town College, this form of sampling seems appropriate. In addition, there is a lesser need of representative sampling in case study research where the need to 'generalize' is not paramount (Flyvberg, 2006).

Prior to starting the interview process, the Personal Tutor of the first year National Diploma Public Services cohort, was approached and briefed on the purpose and nature of the study. At this stage verbal agreement from the Personal Tutor to approach the student cohort was ascertained and a time, date, location agreed.

A meeting was arranged with the whole National Diploma cohort during a group tutorial session on a Tuesday morning in September (2010) to introduce myself as the researcher, the purpose of the visit, the purpose of the study, and to ask for volunteers to participate in the study whilst outlining the likely commitment needed. A participant information sheet was given to the whole cohort (see Appendix A). Students were told that if they were interested in participating in the study they were to express interest to their Personal Tutor who would then forward names to me as the researcher.

From the student cohort of 23, ten students expressed interest in being involved in the study. All students who expressed interest were considered (and then included) for the study. Whilst considering the ten students, their personal context statements were perused in order to help ascertain if they would be suitable to take forward as participants in the study, i.e., would they fit into one of the aforementioned categories. Through analysis of the volunteers willing to be participants in my study, it appeared that there was not a direct fit with these

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three categories. Therefore it was deemed necessary to revise the categories within my study. The following categories provide a means of grouping the learners for analysis whilst still articulating with the supporting questions (*student motivation*) in Chapter One (p.15).

As the final participant group self-selected I will briefly discuss the ramifications of this process and any possible self-selection biases. Potential issues pertinent to my study include:

- Learners that lack in confidence may not opt in to the research. This may result in the loss of potential insightful and useful contributions pertinent to the issue of learning motivation.

- Learners who do opt in may do so for some inherent reason, e.g. to raise an issue about a particular area of teaching practice within their study programme.

- Self-selection bias. The study may reflect some inherent traits or characteristics of the participants. E.g. all those who opt in may have similar past experiences, have transitioned from the same school, or may be friends with similar interests and views.

- The above points may result in a lack of generalizability regarding any findings of this research or may exaggerate a particular issue.

It appears that the potential issues I have highlighted surrounding self-selection bias are similar to those associated with case study research (see pg. 79-86), e.g. the issue of generalizability. However, according to Flyvberg (2006) there is no need to generalize with a case study approach. As my research is exploratory in nature, using a case study methodology, with a small sample cohort (ten participants) there are inevitably going to be some forms of bias. Each learner has their own story to share and will select the information they communicate throughout the process, albeit guided by a set of semi-structured methods. Subsequently, I will analyse the data collected and make decisions regarding the themes that will be explored within this study. Researcher judgement is important when reviewing the final self-selected cohort to ensure that any of the above issues are identified and considered. Having analysed the context statements of each of the ten students who decided to opt in to my study, I am confident that I have a suitable study sample. The learners fit within the revised participant categories, are evenly balanced in terms of gender, and have a

diverse spread of prior attainment at GCSE level. Whilst personally I do not see self-selection as problematic for my own small sample case study research, I do acknowledge the importance of sound researcher judgement when acting as the primary instrument for data gathering (Merriam, 1998).

Revised Participant Categories:

1) a BTEC National Diploma student who scored high grades in their GCSEs had considered or applied for A-levels or the Advanced Diploma, and started a BTEC programme (or transferred to the BTEC programme soon after starting the A-level course);

2) a BTEC National Diploma student who may have scored enough GCSE points to progress to A-levels though had never considered this and had always seen the BTEC route as their first choice;

3) a BTEC National Diploma student who has progressed from the BTEC First Diploma Public Services (level 2) programme due to not achieving the entry criteria to start the BTEC National Diploma (level 3) the previous year.

Table 3.1 provides basic details of the participants along with an extract from their personal context statement.

Table 3.1 Participants in Study

Participant (pseudonyms used) Category in brackets	M/F	Extract from Personal Context Statement
Chris Manley (1)	M	High achiever, originally applied for the Advanced Diploma in Public Services (did not run)
Claire Black (1)	F	6 GCSE Grades A-C (including Maths)
Natalie White (1)	F	Completed AS levels at sixth form then decided to change career direction and joined the L3 Public Services Programme
Ben White (2)	M	7 GCSE grades A-C (mostly B grades). Has always seen the L3 Public Services programme as his first choice
Sam Long (1)	M	High achiever, considered A-levels/ Adv Dip Public Services. 12 GCSE grades A-C.
Laura Small (3)	F	Progressed from L2 to L3 Hair & Beauty programme. Foundation degree was advised though wanted to complete the National Diploma Public Services Programme
Tony Martins (3)	M	Progressed from L2 Public Services with MMM grade. Has recently upgraded GCSE results
Jenny Clarke (1)	F	Considered A-levels. 10 GCSE grades A-C
Jack Green (3)	M	Progressed from sixth form after completing a L2 programme in Public Services
Lucy Taylor (1)	F	Transferred to the L3 Public Services programme from A-levels after 1 week

Table 3.1 highlights that there are five male and five female participants. This even split was purely coincidence and is atypical of a L3 Public Service programme that tends to recruit approximately 75:25 weighted towards male students. Participant names have been replaced with pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. Aside from the even balance of male to female participants the ten participants appeared to be representative of the wider public services cohort with characteristics and backgrounds typical of this group.

Overview of Information Needed

In order to answer my research questions accurately and within context, and to increase validity and reliability of the proposed 'answers', the following information was required; contextual, perceptual, demographic, and theoretical.

Contextual information was sourced primarily from college based literature (College Self-Assessment Report 2011, Ofsted Report 2008, Ofsted Annual Monitoring Report 2010, College Organisational Charts 2011, and College Prospectus') providing information regarding the study site, its context within education, the influences that drive its policy development and implementation, the organizational background. In addition, the history, structure, mission, vision, value and site description was collected and recorded in order to set the context of my study.

Perceptual information was primarily collected through participant interviews where their 'perceptions' of the subject of my inquiry (in this case, what motivates them to learn) were recorded. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) suggest that perceptual information is the most 'critical' information required when interviews are the primary method of data collection. As interviews were used extensively within the second strand of my study (a form of life course research), perceptual information, that is, what the participants' 'perceive' to be true, were recorded. As Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) point out, the perceptual information gained through the interview process depends on the 'worldview' of the participant and therefore is subjective to their own 'frame of reference' and are therefore 'rooted in long-held assumptions' (p.70). Perceptual information may therefore be less predictable and wider ranging than perhaps demographical or contextual information.

Demographic information was sourced primarily from the group and individual context statements that are developed by Course Personal Tutors at the start of each academic year. These statements include a wealth of information about each student including, sex, age, preferred learning style (audio/visual/kinesthetic), BKSB (Maths and English skills analysis software) results in Maths and English, MEG (Minimum Expected Grade) score and

contextualized learning strategies. Demographic information was also derived from the initial interview sessions with each participant, where their personal backgrounds, educational experiences to date, and, reasons for enrolling onto the Uniformed Public Services programme were explored.

The theoretical information needed to underpin and provide the ongoing theoretical grounding for my study was considered as part of an ongoing literature review. Chapter two details the key areas explored and the key texts that helped shape the theoretical framework of the study.

The following table (3.2), adapted from Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) outlines the information needed in relation to the research questions set out at the beginning of this chapter.

A 'Blue Print' for Research

A 9-step plan was created and implemented to provide an order and timeline in record of the completion of the research process. The plan highlights not only the steps taken in carrying out the research but also the road map I used for completion and submission of this thesis. This blueprint was used as a step by step reference document throughout this study. As with any scheme of work, this document remained flexible and evolved as the study matured. To this end, the plan (see appendix) is the final version. The action plan highlights the steps taken to 1) complete the study, and 2) 'write-up' the research thesis. A blended approach was used in terms of planning the completion of both aspects as one holistic project. This helped maintain currency between the research undertaken and the literature that was being developed. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) and Wellington *et al* (2005) were used in shaping the action plan.

Table 3.2 Overview of Information Needed

Type of information	Information required	Methods
Contextual	Organizational background, history, structure, mission, vision, value, site description, staff structure	Document review
Perceptual	Participants' perceptions of their experiences which relate to the study.	Interviews, focus groups
Demographic	Descriptive information about the participants and the cohort of learners' that they form part of within the study site.	Review of student records, context statements, interviews
Theoretical	Substantive background knowledge of motivation, learner/learning motivation, value added, learner achievement, national policy, college policy, influencing documents (eg. Wolf Report)	Literature review, Conference attendance
Research Question 1. Why do learners within post-compulsory education studying vocational courses at Mid-town College have a perceived lack of motivation to achieve the level of progress expected as indicated through low value added scores?	Learners' levels of motivation to learn. Learners' levels of motivation to achieve as highly as expected. Reasons for aforementioned levels of learning/learner motivation. Learners' perception of 'what motivates them to learn?'. Learners' understanding of key performance measures.	Interviews, lesson observations, focus groups.
Research Question 2. Can Bourdieu's concepts of 'capital', 'field' and '*habitus*' be used as theoretical and conceptual tools to understand the learners' life courses and help explain their motivation and orientation to learning?	Understanding of Bourdieu's conceptual tools. Correlations between conceptual tools and 'life course style' research data. Learners' background, orientation to learning, brief life history, educational background, educational timeline for each learner. Significant life experiences of each learner.	Review of student records, context statements, interviews, review of literature (Bourdieu).
Research Question 3. What can be learned (teachers, managers, policy makers) about learning motivation through completing this study?	Emerging Themes. Significant phenomena not discussed previously or expected. Expected phenomena that reinforces theories, thoughts and/or hypothesis.	All aforementioned methods through exploratory research.

Table 3.2 highlights the research information required and the method(s) for retrieving this information. The table also sets the research questions in context to the contextual, theoretical, perceptual and demographic information categories.

Data collection methods

A substantive literature review preceded and therefore informed the data collection stage of the study. Consideration of the body of literature reviewed in Chapter Two along with the key theoretical concepts of Bourdieu helped develop the conceptual framework for the study and as a result the questions that were asked, and the way they were asked during data collection.

Data collection methods used – A multi-method data collection process was used. Semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection method with the largest amount of time given to this aspect of data collection. The main reason for this being the information required for the form of life course used for strand two, is in my opinion, best collected using this method. In addition to semi-structured one-to-one interviews with participants, other supporting data collection methods were used, including; lesson observations, focus groups, and policy review.

Semi-structured interviews – Partington (2001) describes qualitative interviews as; 'interviews that rely for their quality on the nature of the interactions with the interviewees', and that 'issues covered' will often emphasise the importance of 'empathy and rapport, listening and questioning, restatement, clarification and persistence' (p.32). Partington continues to explain that the importance of semi-structured interview technique and the suitability of the interviewer are important when seeking to obtain 'quality data'. The term 'quality data' itself emphasises that the data collected through means of qualitative interviews is 'rich' in quality, that is, in detail, and will allow the researcher to 'gain explanations and information on material that is not directly accessible: perceptions, attitudes and values, matters which are difficult to obtain by alternative methods' (*ibid* p.32). The qualitative interview, in contrast to a quantitative style interview, may be less 'scripted' allowing the researcher to explore points as they emerge during the interview process. This extreme

example showing opposing binaries may be overly simplistic as the difference between qualitative and quantitative methods are often less distinct. Kvale (1983) captures the purpose of the qualitative style interview in his definition. He defines the qualitative research interview as "an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (p.174).

It is evident from the previous paragraph that qualitative style interviews are more flexible and open when considered in contrast to more quantitative methods (Seidman, 2013) where set questions may offer little more in terms of benefit, that is, quality of response than, for example, a questionnaire. With this in mind, I selected to use the semi-structured approach as I believe semi-structured interviews can help with building rapport and allow questions to be prepared ahead of time, which in turn helped facilitate free flowing discussion allowing the relationship with the interviewee to develop without possible awkward silences or 'stuttered' progress. When time is limited as it was in my study (due to the limited free time of the learner) a semi structured approach helped keep the process on track. There is also the possibility that I appeared more competent during the interview process through using the semi structured approach which in turn may have inspired confidence in the interviewee. Semi-structured interviews provide greater flexibility to allow participants (learners) the freedom to express their views in their own way (Seidman, 2013). Due to the nature of the research questions set within this study, the limited access to the participants, and my 'developing' experience and expertise as a researcher and interviewer, a semi-structured approach felt most suitable.

The questions asked during the interviews were open ended and provided merely a scaffolding to move the data collection forward with some focus. Participants were encouraged to simply speak about their experiences with sporadic cues given to prompt further commentary, explore emerging themes, or move the interview forward during quiet periods. In order to ensure there were no periods of quiet where learners had nothing further to say and I had no further prompts, that could have led to missed opportunities and lost data, a detailed interview guidance sheet was developed (see Appendix C). The sheet

provided many categories to discuss with many prompts for each category. Indeed if the guidance sheet was used too explicitly to control the pace and direction of the questioning and resultant answers, the interviews would certainly have been 'structured'. The guidance sheet was not used in this way. The questions/prompts used in providing the loose interview framework were linked to the 'overview of information needed' as displayed in this chapter in table 3.2, which, in turn was borne from the theoretical framework established from the literature review (Chapter Two).

In order to get the best quality answers a number of techniques/strategies were employed during the interview sessions. The first of these techniques or strategies was to minimise disruptions to the 'flow' of the interview and indeed the 'flow' of the participants answers. Partington (2001) explains; 'The interviewer should minimise interruptions when a participant is talking. Providing supportive nods, agreement and so on is more appropriate than excess verbalisation which may distract the respondent and lead him or her in unproductive directions' (p.32). Another technique, was the use of familiar recording equipment to avoid distraction. This is detailed further below. Other techniques used to put participants at ease include removing my tie and jacket to appear more casual. The issues faced with being a researcher manager are explored further in the ethics section of this chapter. Interviews were recorded using an 'application' on an iPad electronic tablet device. The iPad had a slim profile and with its cover closed looked similar in appearance to a file organiser. The aim was to use a recording device that would blend into the background throughout the interview period. This would allow participants to focus on their commentary and the free flowing discussion without the potential distraction of a traditional recording device. Participants were always aware of the recording device. The purpose of the iPad was for the recording device to not be a distraction. The iPad device also promoted easy filing and organisation of recordings in multiple formats. All recordings were dated and labelled immediately after the participant left the interview location maximising data management and minimising the potential for lost files. As the iPad was security locked (with an electronic combination code), there were added data protection

benefits from using this recording device. To further increase security, as soon as possible following the interview the files were forwarded over a secure network to a secure network storage drive. The files on the iPad device were then deleted to ensure that a lost device would not compromise data security.

Lesson observations – This method of data collection was strongly facilitated by my researcher positionality as manager/researcher. It would have been impossible to separate my manager and researcher roles, as being the 'primary instrument' for data gathering (Merriam, 1998), along with working within the study site, I was continuously subject to information pertinent to my study. Whilst this presented its own challenges and ethical considerations, it also provided many opportunities to enhance and facilitate the data collection process. The key consideration here was to raise awareness of my dual role and to ensure permission was sought to record and interpret my observations within my research study. Direct observation provided me with first-hand experience of both the pedagogical practice and motivational cues the National Diploma Public Services students experienced during lessons and tutorials, along with other key information to my study such as teacher/learner rapport, behaviours of teachers and learners and the impact of these on learning motivation. The observation process allowed me to record information as it occurred in the sessions thus enabling a vivid and accurate account of the situation. I had to be mindful of the impact of my presence during these observation sessions and not be seen as intrusive to the learning experience. My dual role helped in this respect as I often observe sessions as part of the quality assurance systems that are in place at the research site. Learners and teachers are familiar with the observation process, its purpose and my involvement with this. Therefore the observations completed as part of the data collection process for this thesis felt like an extension of standard and typical practice.

When discussing observation as a research method, May (2011) refers to 'what has now become a standard reference on fieldwork roles' (p.171), Gold's (1969) four roles of field research, 1) complete participant, 2) participant as observer, 3) observer as participant, and 4) complete observer. These four roles express the

varying degree of involvement the researcher has with the phenomenon under investigation.

'Complete participant' refers to a researcher who attempts to fully engage in the setting under investigation, its practices and the groups and/or agents pertinent to the setting (May, 2011). The complete participant role is often covert as the intentions of the researcher may not be made explicit to those being observed. This 'covert' role, whilst useful in gaining highly accurate data (Graham, 1995 cited in May, 2011) raises ethical considerations. The ethical considerations of the 'insider researcher' and the use of 'overt' and 'covert' observation is discussed later in this chapter.

'Participant as observer' is a role where the researcher makes their presence and intentions known to the participants and attempt to form relationships with the participants through developing rapport. Van Maanen (1978) refers to this role as becoming a 'fan', that is, having a strong desire to find out more about, and/or better understand a setting. Unlike the 'complete participant' the researcher does not attempt to become or act as one of the group. There are instances where full engagement in the setting under investigation is not appropriate. Polsky (1985, p.117 cited in May, 2011) presents a strong example; "… in doing field research on criminals you damned well better not pretend to be 'one of them', because they will test this claim out".

'Observer as participant' is a role the researcher adopts when they intend to 'build up' an understanding of a social setting over a period of time. Gold (1969) suggests that this role is often used when more formal observation is required, for example, studies involving a minimal number of interviews.

'Complete observer' is a role the researcher adopts where no participatory involvement is needed. In this role the researcher is completely removed from interactions within the social setting and has little or no effect on the group(s) or agent(s) being investigated. When considering my role as an observer I position myself on a continuum between 'participant as observer' and 'observer as participant'. My position within the organization under investigation would dismiss the option of 'complete observer' as I am

known to both staff and students at the setting. The Hawthorne Effect (see below) and my own personal bias limits my ability to 'be removed' from interactions at the setting, particularly as I had to move between the roles of manager and researcher throughout the data collection period. It may be suggested that the Hawthorne Effect would exist in the setting regardless of my new position as 'researcher' as the impact of my role as 'manager' may be more significant to staff and students. The 'Hawthorne Effect' (Mayo, 1933) became known as a term following an investigation into the Hawthorne factory in the United States. Researchers observed production line workers in an attempt to identify ways to improve efficiency and productivity. It was discovered that the workers increased their work rate whenever they were observed, regardless of any other interventions to improve efficiency. This effect, now known as the 'Hawthorne Effect' is particularly pertinent to my study as I have a dual role as researcher manager and I am known to the teachers and students involved in the study as a senior manager. The issue of the 'insider researcher' is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

One way of mitigating the Hawthorne Effect would be the use of 'covert' observation. However, there are significant ethical considerations when using this type of observation, namely issues surrounding participant consent to involvement in the study and use of data collected for research purposes. May (2011) suggests that there are situations where covert and unobtrusive methods of observation are appropriate as they 'enable research on sensitive topics'. An example of this may be 'netnography' where Langer and Beckman (2005) argue within their study the merits of the analysis of 'free behaviour of individuals' on the Internet in order to gain useful insights into phenomenon. However, these methods of observation are not appropriate for this study due to the age of the participants involved, the context of the educational setting and the potential harm that may be caused to participants. From both moral and ethical perspectives, I have taken a strongly 'overt' approach to the data collection process (see ethics section).

It may be argued that my role was 'complete observer' as I am fully engaged in the setting, its practices and the groups and agents involved with the setting. I strongly refute this due to the overt approach I have adopted and the steps taken to minimize the 'insider researcher' effect through distancing myself (as far as possible) from my 'manager' role when collecting data.

For the lesson observation data collection process I developed a new format lesson observation form. The data I wanted to capture was different to that collected during the college lesson observation process and the format used by the college quality assurance team was too cumbersome and prescriptive for my investigation into learning motivation. An example of the lesson observation form that I used to collect data for the purpose of this thesis can be found in the appendices section (Appendix G). Ten lesson observations were completed throughout the data collection process covering all of the taught modules on the first year of the National Diploma Public Services programme. The ten lesson observations were completed during three observation windows during the months of November, January and May. Each lesson observation lasted between 30 and 45 minutes in duration where I recorded the teacher and student activity at five minute intervals whilst making notes regarding the learners levels of engagement (if on task or not) and behaviours. Key observations along with any questions I had regarding the learning process were recorded for follow up discussion during focus group meetings. The focus group meetings generally followed lesson observations (see below). Table 3.3 presents the lesson observation schedule followed during the data collection process.

Focus groups - Much like the interview process, focus groups followed a similar semi-structured approach. The location of the meeting was set in familiar surroundings (a classroom familiar to the participants) and the structure of the meeting was flexible to allow emerging themes to be explored. On arrival to the focus group all participants were briefed on its purpose and informed consent was attained. The focus groups involved only the ten participants who opted into the study and usually followed an observation of a classroom session where learners reflected on the session and the most/least engaging or motivating aspects. Topics of discussion usually explored key themes or events that

occurred during a classroom session the learners have recently experienced (usually immediately prior to the focus group). For example, the topic may have been set as 'thinking back to your last session, what aspects motivated you to learn?'

The method of recording and organising the data from the focus group meetings mirrored that of the semi-structured interviews. The key strength of this method is the economies of scale relating to data collection. As previously mentioned, one of the limitations to my study was the amount of time participants could give during a busy college day. Focus groups facilitated data collection from a higher number of participants that would have been untimely using individual semi-structured interviews. This collection of concentrated data worked well with the exploratory nature of my research study and may have helped mitigate the effects of the imbalanced power relationship that exists during one-to-one interviews (Hennink, 2014). This was particularly evident with larger groups (>four) where the participants appeared more confident in leading discussions. There are limitations to this data collection method, primarily in the lack of confidentiality amongst group members (Hennink, 2014). This was considered during the data collection design process. To minimise this issue the topics discussed within the semi-structure of the focus groups were not of a personal nature. Life course/history discussions were avoided with the focus being on current practice and specific examples I have observed during lessons. It was important that quieter members of the group were given space and an opportunity to communicate responses. I did not want the focus groups to be dominated by more confident or talkative individuals, therefore it was crucial to direct the flow of the discussion at certain points, asking for the views of the quieter members.

Why focus groups? – Whilst focus groups are said to be 'under-used in social research' (Gibbs, 1997), they can be a valuable tool for social researchers (Barbour, 2007 and Hennick, 2007) and have become popular in recent years;

> "...partly because they are seen as the method which can provide results quickly... perceived as a method which can generate complex information at low cost and with the minimum amount of time.... It also can be used with a wide range of people and groups in different settings." (Liamputtong, 2011, p.2)

Kitzinger (2005, p.56), suggests that focus groups are 'focussed' because they "involve some kind of collective activity". Within the context of my study the 'focus' of the group would be a discussion centred on a specific activity/incident observed in a teaching session or a set topic such as 'the most/least motivating aspects of the lesson'. Therefore the type of focus group used in my study has a 'semi-structure' and will "encourage a range of responses which provide a greater understanding of the attitudes, behaviour, opinions or perceptions of participants on the research issues" (Hennink, 2007, p.6). This is reinforced by Powell *et al* (1996) who define a focus group as "a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research" (p.499). The focus group therefore provides a framework for a group of learners to discuss a set topic such as 'learning motivation' and presents the researcher with the opportunity to observe and/or facilitate the discussion and gain insight into the thoughts and feelings of the group about a given topic. The idea of 'facilitation' by the researcher is reinforced by Morgan (1997) who suggests that focus groups 'rely' on 'interaction within the group' and 'topics that are supplied by the researcher' (p.12) and further supported by Merton and Kendall's (1946) paper in which their 'focused interview' method was seen as a forerunner to the focus group and helped establish the 'parameters for focus group development' (Gibbs, 1997). In their paper, Merton and Kendall discussed the use of 'an explicit interview guide' to add structure and 'focus' to the data collection process. I did not use an 'explicit' interview guide when facilitating the focus groups pertinent to this study, however, I did use my notes from the lesson observation preceding the focus groups as a prompt for discussion. Particularly when exploring the participants' view on a specific activity or incident I observed during the lesson.

When discussing the benefits of the focus group method the benefits to those participating in the research should not be underestimated (Gibbs, 1997). Focus groups can be empowering to the individuals involved as they have the chance to

work collaboratively with both each other and the researcher (Goss and Leinbach, 1996). This form of collaborative research can help develop trust and rapport between the participants and the researcher as the topic under discussion is explored as a group (Kitzinger, 1995). Focus groups can also be a useful platform for participants who are less confident in one to one situations such as interviews to find their voice and contribute more openly to discussion. Liamputtong (2011) supports this idea stating;

> "Focus group discussions are more akin to natural social interaction among participants. Thus, the environment of focus groups may be more comfortable and enjoyable for the research participants." (p.4)

However, this may not be the case for all participants as focus groups can be intimidating for inarticulate or shy members (Gibbs, 1997). Focus groups may be useful if there are power differences between the participants and researcher as some individuals may find comfort and confidence in engaging with research within a group context (Morgan and Kreuger, 1993). Madriz (2003) supports this idea suggesting that group work can be useful for researchers working from a 'power-sensitive' perspective and may help reduce the imbalanced power relationship that makes the researcher the 'authoritative voice'. Madriz (2003, cited in Liamputtong, 2011) states focus groups 'create data from multiple voices'. This is a particular consideration for my study and the impact of the 'insider researcher' (see ethics section). A further benefit of focus groups, when used to complement to other methods, is to triangulate data (Morgan 1988). This is discussed later in this chapter.

Whilst focus groups have potential as a research tool they are not without their limitations. Gibbs (1997) suggests that some of these limitations can be mitigated by 'careful planning and moderating', but others are 'unavoidable' and 'peculiar' to this approach. A key limitation with focus groups is the researcher has far less control over the data produced than other methods such as one to one interviews (Morgan, 1988). This is reinforced by Liamputtong (2011) who states that "focus groups puts control of the interaction into the hands of the participants rather than the researcher" (p.4). This is primarily due to the open ended nature of focus groups and whilst the researcher may set the topic of

discussion and, on occasion, bring the focus back to this topic, the group will be allowed to have free flowing discussion and interaction.

Another key limitation of focus groups is it cannot be assumed that the participants are expressing their own 'definitive individual view' (Gibbs, 1997). It may be difficult for the researcher to draw out individual messages due to the group context, the influence of others within the group and the complex nature of obtaining a plethora of views and observing a myriad of interactions within the group setting. Therefore, Gibbs (1997) believes the focus group is more difficult to control than other methods such as interviewing. Liamputtong (2011) embraces these difficulties explaining;

> "A focus group is not simply a means for obtaining accounts of individuals. Rather, it is a means to set up a negotiation of meanings through intra- and inter-personal debates." (p.4)

Focus groups also differ from other, more natural, methods such as observation as they are organised events where the researcher convenes the group and sets the direction of discussion or 'focus'. With focus groups the researcher is not necessarily waiting for something to happen as would be the case of the 'complete observer'.

Focus groups can be difficult to organise and conduct due to the challenges in managing multiple participants at once. Gibbs (1997) suggests it is not be easy to convene a representative sample for a focus group activity and the 'open discussion' may discourage less articulate or less confident people from participating leading to self-censorship. Roberts and Nason (2011) define self-censorship as "the conscious withholding of one's true opinion from an audience perceived to disagree with that opinion" (p.57). Roberts and Nason (2011) identify six sources of self-censorship:

1. Self-Presentation – "the strategic activities adopted by individuals designed to give certain impressions to other people" (p.62). This source of self-censorship can manifest through individuals not wanting to be perceived as being outside of the group norm.

2. Maintaining group harmony – the inherent desire to maintain team harmony and produce a convergence of ideas akin to 'group think',

defined by Forsyth (1999, p.40) as "a strong occurrence-seeking tendency that interferes with effective group decision making".

3. Concern for others – the inherent desire to maintain positive relationships with other members of the focus group, e.g. not wanting to offend anyone else within the group through disagreement.

4. Equality of contribution – the decision to opt out of contributing to discussion due to the perception that others are not engaging equally with the activity.

5. Perceived lack of power – a source of self-censorship that may occur when there is a perceived change in power balance within a cohort. E.g. a teacher joins a group of students during a focus group discussion.

6. Focus on the completing of the task – an inherent desire by group members to accept the opinions of others in order to quickly advance discussion, perhaps to resolve conflict. Rimor *et al* (2010) call this 'rapid consensus'.

These issues may be difficult to overcome due to the nature of group discussion and participant relationships, however, as the focus group facilitator I will attempt to identify any sources of self-censorship as quickly as possible and attempt to reduce the impact through managing interactions, encouraging equal participation from all participants, reinforcing the need for honesty, and promoting independent thinking. Whilst I may not be able to mitigate self-censorship completely, I acknowledge the potential impact on the data collection process and will give due consideration during my analysis.

It is important to reinforce at this point that focus groups are one of a range of methods used to collect data from the participants involved in the study. Finally, focus groups can never be fully confidential or anonymous as information is shared with the others in the group. Therefore the skill of the researcher in setting and maintaining the topic of discussion is crucial.

Ethical considerations for focus groups are very similar to interviews and observations (Homan 1991). Confidentiality, anonymity, consent, the impact of my dual role as researcher/manager, participants' awareness of the research, its purpose and the use of data is particularly pertinent (see ethics section within this chapter). However, a particular ethical issue for consideration when conducting focus groups is the handling of sensitive information and confidentiality within a group setting. This issue is compounded during focus

groups due to the multiple participants involved. It was therefore extremely important that from the outset all participants had full clarity that their contributions will be shared with the others in the group as well as with the researcher.

Table 3.3 Data Collection Timeline

Month / Year	Activity Strand 2	Activity Strand 3
Sept 2010	Participants selected for study (10 students from the Extended Diploma Public Services red cohort). Programme delivery starts 27.09.2010	
Oct 2010	10-15 minute orientation interviews with 10 selected participants – from week commencing 18.10.2010	
Nov 2010	20-30 minute follow up interviews – Life Course Research with 10 participants	1st round observations x4 of teaching and focus groups x4 (term 1)
Jan 2011		2nd round of observations x3 of teaching and focus groups x3 (term 2)
Feb 2011	20-30 minute follow up interviews (mid-point of year) with 10 participants	
May 2011	20-30 minute follow up interviews (end of year) with 9 participants	3rd round of observations x3 of teaching and focus groups x3 (term 3)

Table 3.3 presents the approximate timelines for the collection of data pertinent to strands two and three of my study. The lesson observations and follow up focus groups occurred during the same windows with the focus groups usually following the observed lesson. It was not always possible to conduct the focus group following the observed classroom session as there was not always a planned break between the end of one session and the beginning of another. On the one occasion this was the case, the focus group was completed at the earliest possible opportunity, in this instance following a subsequent lesson. Fortunately, the learning experience I observed was still fresh in the minds of the participants and the small break (90 minutes) between the observation and the focus group did not hinder the data collection process. The focus groups were short in duration lasting approximately 10-15 minutes. This was due to the short amount of time between sessions when the focus groups were normally implemented.

Orientation interviews - Orientation interviews were completed to build rapport and confidence between the researcher and interviewee. The orientation interviews lasted ten minutes in duration and explored a limited number of themes. Although some of the data was recorded, and was useful to my research, the purpose of the orientation interviews was not solely to collect data, it was to build familiarisation with process, the equipment, and the location in order to facilitate a more free-flowing, honest and open interview process for any follow up meetings with the interviewees. The orientation interviews were based around simple set questions regarding the topic of student motivation and achieving potential. Whilst the purpose of the orientation interviews was to familiarize both myself and the students with the interviewing process, the data collected was useful to my study. The data was used to refine my series of question categories that were later used to explore topics in greater detail during the main interviewing sessions.

With regards to the other data collection methods used (observations, focus group meetings, desk-based review) it was not necessary to complete field tests or pilot studies as these methods were well established and previously used within the study site with staff and students familiar with these methods.

Ownership of data – It is important at this point to define the approach/perspective taken to ownership of data. As Loshin (2002) highlights, there are many parties that can potentially claim ownership of research data, including:

- Researcher/ Creator– The party that creates or generates the data.
- Consumer – The party that uses the data owns the data.
- Compiler - This is the entity that selects and compiles information from different information sources.
- Organisation - All data that enters the organisation or is created within the organisation is completely owned by the organisation.
- Funder - the user that commissions the data creation claims ownership.

- Decoder - In environments where information is "locked" inside particular encoded formats, the party that can unlock the information becomes an owner of that information.

- Packager - the party that collects information for a particular use and adds value through formatting the information for a particular market or set of consumers.

- Reader as owner - the value of any data that can be read is subsumed by the reader and, therefore, the reader gains value through adding that information to an information repository.

- Subject as owner - the subject of the data claims ownership of that data, mostly in reaction to another party claiming ownership of the same data.

- Purchaser as owner – the individual or organization that buys or licenses data may stake a claim to ownership (adapted from NIU RCR, 2014).

In consideration of this thesis there are many potential stakeholders that articulate to the above categories including the awarding institution (University of the West of England), and sponsoring employer (anonymized). In light of this I will use Scofield's (1998 cited in NIU RCR, 2014) term 'stewardship'. This term, implies 'a broader responsibility where the user must consider the consequences of making changes over 'his' data' (NIU RCR, 2014) and thus avoiding the convoluted network of ownership. 'Stewardship' provides accountability and recognition for data creation whilst not limiting its use in the wider research community.

For this study all data collected is 'stewarded' by the researcher at the point of collection. The researcher is the primary (primary refers to first author in this instance) author in terms of the interpretation and use of the data. As the first author I will be responsible for any errors of fact or interpretation and will be the sole defender of my thesis once published and/or presented for viva scrutiny. Therefore, in terms of 'ownership' I was the 'steward' of the raw data collected and 'owner' of my own interpretations in its use. The term 'ownership' does not feature within the BERA (2011) ethical research guidelines. Instead the theme of ownership is discussed within the responsibilities to educational professionals,

policy makers and the general public in terms of the sharing of data, or more specifically, making public the results of research for the benefit of the research community. In consideration of the omission of the term 'ownership' I feel the use of both the term 'stewardship' along with 'ownership' brings clarity to my perspective and falls in line with BERA (2011) guidelines.

Data analysis and synthesis

A Grounded Theory approach to data management - Using Grounded Theory the researcher attempts to discover a theory of a 'process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of the research participants' (Charmaz, 2000; Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1998 cited in Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008). Grounded Theory consists of two key principles, 1) the constant comparison, that is, the continuous comparison of data with emerging themes or categories, and 2) the 'theoretical sampling of different groups to maximize the similarities and differences of information' with the aim to 'generate theory from the data or modify or extend existing theory' (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008, p.11). For this study an adapted version of grounded theory was used, primarily through the use of constant comparison and the organization of data into emerging themes and categories. Although a similar approach has been used, the approach cannot be called 'grounded theory' in that there are some differences in the way the categorization system and constant comparison has been applied to the data sets. Therefore, for the purpose of my study the terminology 'thematic analysis' or 'form of grounded theory' will be used. It is important to state here that there was a divergence in thinking of how grounded theory is used in research with Glaser and Strauss taking on different perspectives. My approach uses elements of both Glaserian (Glaser, 1978) and Straussian (Stauss and Corbin, 1990) perspectives and is closer to the later grounded theory approach termed 'constructivist grounded theory' (Mills *et al*, 2006) due to my constructivist epistemological stance and understanding of my own positions and dispositions and how these may influence the research process. In using a grounded theory approach rather than following a strict set of pre-established grounded theory guidelines I benefit from the freedoms and flexibilities of the Glaserian

perspective whilst embracing the systematic rigour of the Straussian perspective. The basic principles of grounded theory are evident within my approach, such as, categorization of data, thematic analysis, and enabling themes to emerge and evolve through until data saturation is reached. However, there are subtle changes in how my own influence (researcher positionality) is accounted for and subsequently managed. An example is the literature review, which whilst started prior to data collection, was adapted and continued following data collection. The purpose of this approach was to limit the influence of the literature review during the thematic analysis and avoid the temptation to force categorization in line with the literature and thus resembling more of the constant comparison notion that forms part of the Glaserian perspective.

It is important at this point for me to briefly discuss induction and deduction and its place in my research in relation to the adapted form of grounded theory I have used. As stated earlier, the approach I have used is closer to Mills (2006) 'constructivist grounded theory'. With constructivist grounded theory the researcher begins with a specific set of questions on a substantive subject and will conduct a literature review to understand the research that has gone before in the area of interest. This contrasts with classical grounded theory where no questions are asked at the outset of the study (Hernandez and Andrews, 2012). Therefore, unlike classical grounded theory (CGT), there is a deductive acknowledgment when using a form of constructivist grounded theory. Due to my understanding of how my own positions and dispositions as a researcher-manager may have influenced the data collection process, the literature review starting before data collection, and the development of primary research questions at the outset of my research, it is important to acknowledge the presence of deduction, particularly when starting with a strong theoretical basis such as Bourdieu. With CGT the researcher uses a primarily inductive process, starting with data collection in order to 'build' a theory (Glaser, 1998). Whilst deduction is present in constructivist grounded theory, it may be argued that there is always an element of deduction present in all forms of grounded theory, particularly in the way that the researcher deduces where further data should be collected following initial coding. However, I believe, whilst there is a need to

acknowledge the deductive aspects, there is still a strong inductive emphasis present in the *form* of grounded theory I have used. Data collection evolved through the use of semi-structured interviews and the emergence of themes. These themes were not predetermined. Whilst it is not expected that a qualitative researcher will approach a study as a 'tabula rasa' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), it is important to acknowledge that both induction and deduction plays a role within my research.

It is also important at this point to defend my use of *a form of* grounded theory when a pre-existing theoretical framework is being used. To bring credence to my approach I will draw on the work of Thomas and James (2006) who suggest it is problematic for grounded theorists to 'quarantine themselves' from the data they are analyzing in order to facilitate the emergence of theory. When considering the impact of the researcher on data analysis and the formation of codes and categories when using a form of grounded theory, I echo the thoughts of Thomas and James (2006) in challenging the idea of 'emergence' (p.18). Strauss and Corbin (1998, cited in Thomas and James, 2006) focus on *emergence* as the key to developing theory, stating;

> "...one must remember that because emergence is the foundation of our approach to theory building, a researcher cannot enter an investigation with a list of preconceived concepts, a guiding theoretical framework, or a well thought out design. Concepts and design must be allowed to emerge from the data." (p.34)

Thomas and James question if it is possible for a grounded theorist to move outside of or 'beyond' any pre-conceptions they may have or theoretical influences they may have previously encountered. They suggest that a researcher will emerge with nothing more than 'reportage' if it was possible for them to approach the investigation as an 'empty vessel' or 'blank slate'. The idea of moving 'outside of' or 'beyond' one's own knowledge, thoughts or prior understanding can be problematic for me as a researcher who identifies with a constructivist epistemology. I support Thomas and James' view that 'the credibility of much that is at the root of qualitative inquiry is at stake' and that 'such inquiry balances on the meanings that we as people read into the social encounters we make in life' (p.18). The understanding that

'meaning is constructed' by the researcher is fundamental to qualitative research. Thomas and James (2006) amplify this issue, stating;

> "...a starting point of such researchers is surely that meaning is constructed by the interpreter. The interrelationship between interpreter and interpretation is indissoluble; there is no ground, no hidden truth residing somewhere in the data ready to inscribe itself, just as there is no Lockean tabula rasa in the researcher waiting to be engraved." (p.19)

They also state;

> "Not even with a superhuman feat of energy could grounded theorists detach themselves from their backgrounds, from their own sets of hermeneutic brackets, from all the knowledge, biases and prejudices they have about human behaviour." (p.19)

Both of these statements resonate with my own researcher positionality where I refute the idea of a purely inductive form of grounded theory. To accept the notion of an inductive form of grounded theory is to eliminate the possibility of researcher assumptions, and as I have used in this thesis, 'foreshadowed problems'. Thomas and James (2006) refutes the classic idea that grounded theory, from an inductive perspective is 'more successful than theories logically deduced from a priori assumptions' (Glaser and Strauss, 1975, p.6), stating;

> "...a priori assumptions are uneliminable, and this fact – far from being a source of anguish – is what the qualitative researcher should expect: a priori assumptions are what make study a) worthwhile, and b) possible... Those 'theories logically deduced from a priori assumptions' are no more or less sinister than the already existing hermeneutic brackets in the researcher's head... These also comprise a priori assumptions albeit that someone hasn't taken the trouble to write them down in order to verify them... There can be little doubt that some process of verification – albeit implicit rather than explicit – is going on." (p.19-20)

In reflection of comments of Thomas and James and also my own epistemological stance, I can justify my use of a form of constructivist grounded theory when a pre-existing theoretical framework is being used. It may be suggested that a theoretical framework is always present in one form or another (even if only in the mind of the researcher) in qualitative forms of inquiry where the researcher is the primary instrument for data gathering and analysis.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

How was the data analysed? - The main method of data analysis used in this study is a form of constant comparison/grounded theory (Strauss, 1987). Field notes (including observation forms), interview transcripts and focus group transcripts were studied using thematic analysis. These documents were studied for indicators of events and behaviour and placed into a colour-coded system. These groups of colour-coded documents were then compared to find consistencies and differences. Those documents showing consistencies (similar meanings pointing to an emerging theme) were categorised as specific events. The process of analysis, comparison and shifting/copying of data between colour-coded categories (or indeed into newly formed colour-coded categories) continued until no new categories were formed and there was no further movement/copying of data between categories. Each category was then listed in order of priority for discussion. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the saturation element of grounded theory was used in my study. When applying a form of constructivist grounded theory data saturation is more focused due to the primary research questions being set at the outset of the study. Bowen (2008) suggests that there are no specific guidelines for determining theoretical saturation leaving researchers to make their own judgement call. Therefore, when reaching a point in my data analysis where the data became repetitive, no further themes emerged, and I believed further data collection would not lead to more information pertinent to my primary research questions, I became satisfied I had reached the saturation point of data collection.

How is the data presented? - Qualitative researchers often use methods to display their findings, which are highly descriptive, resulting in what Bogdan and Taylor (1975) refer to as 'rich data'. It is through this rich data that readers can gain an 'insiders' view of the students, teachers and middle/senior managers' world, and therefore gain a deeper, 'richer' understanding of their thoughts and feelings.

The data gained from the interviews and focus groups were organised, sorted and written as researcher narratives. These researcher narratives are used to introduce the participants to readers in order to set in context the participant

quotes that followed. The interview/focus group transcripts also formed the basis of the participant quotes. The use of the researcher narrative allows readers to gain an understanding of the participants' particular moments and experiences, providing a context to their thoughts and feelings at that time. The narrative represents a short introductory story for each participant. Cortazzi and Macleod cited in Sparkes and Partington (2003) suggests:

> "...a story not only imparts information about the inner world of the storyteller or the person(s) about whom the story is being told, but also reveals a great deal about the identity, intentions, and feelings of the person telling the story." (p293)

The data gained from the 29 semi-structured interviews and 10 focus groups were merged into a holistic portrayal of the participants' thoughts, feelings and experiences. The reasoning behind why there were a number of separate semi-structured interviews for each participant, as opposed to a single interview is due to this study being 'exploratory' in nature and due to the time constraints regarding participant access. As student participants have busy college schedules it was not possible to conduct lengthy (1 hour long) interviews. Therefore, a series of 29 smaller 20-30 minute interviews were used (see table 3.3, page 114). Gheradi and Turner (1987, cited in Richardson, 1996) suggest that exploratory style research can be defined as:

> "the jottings in the margins of ongoing research, a kind of research in which order is not very immediately attained, a messy, puzzling and intriguing kind of research in which the conclusions are not known before the investigations are carried out." (p.12)

In justification of the use of the researcher narrative to introduce participants, I believe the emerging themes (including critical incidents, social aspects, disruptions in education, and the influence of significant others) needs to be presented in a way that maintains the richness and quality of the participants thoughts and feelings that were recorded during the data collection process. Whilst the presentation of participant quotes provides useful insight in to the thoughts and feeling of each participant, the introductory narratives provides an additional layer of context to help the reader gain a better understanding of the data presented.

Ethical considerations

At the outset of this study the British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines for educational research (2004)[1] were considered and applied. These 'tenets of best ethical practice' (p.3) served as a reference point throughout the research process and influenced the research design and implementation.

Ethical issues and strategies - When exploring a complex issue such as motivation there are potentially some ethical issues that may have been encountered during the interview process such as a student's admittance of plagiarism, cheating or what is said about another student or staff member. The interview process could have been seriously affected if my own personal opinions surrounding these issues were allowed to surface. This may have, in turn, presented a moral and ethical dilemma, as I strive to maintain a professional and open approach to an issue that I feel so strongly about, whilst at all times ensuring strict confidentiality, objective understanding and a supportive environment is maintained.

Interviews have an ethical dimension because they concern interpersonal interaction and produce information about human condition. Kvale (1996) explains that there are three main areas of ethical issues when interviewing participants. These are informed consent, confidentiality and the consequences of the interviews. These needed to be considered prior to commencing participant interviews. It would be extremely difficult to prepare for every possible ethical issue that could arise, due to the diversity of human behaviour and emotion. However, good ethical practice can be upheld through planning and implementing a series of rules or protocol that can be used prior to starting the interviews. The research ethics strategy that was in place throughout this study consists of answering a set of 'ethical questions' (see appendix F). The answers to these questions were considered prior to starting the interviews.

Before commencing the interviewing process all participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and the data collection process. A participant information sheet (see appendix A) was given to all participants and explained in detail. In

addition informed consent was gained orally from the participant at the outset of each data collection point (re-clarified at the start of each semi-structured interview). The participants were also informed that they were under no obligation to complete the interview and may withdraw at any time. This message was reinforced in the participant information sheet. An explanation of the study and how the data gained from the interviews is to be used was given orally to the participants immediately before commencing the interview. If any foreseeable consequences of the research emerge, then these were to be made clear to the participants. Following these guidelines allowed me to be upfront with the participants, minimising potential trauma and protecting oneself from possible litigation.

Throughout the interviewing process confidentiality and anonymity could not be guaranteed to all interviewees. An example where confidentiality and anonymity may have been jeopardized would have been the emergence of illegal activities (such as the physical abuse of others) during the interviews. Fortunately, I did not come across such issues during the interview process. It was made clear to the participants prior to them engaging in the interviews that any illegal activities discussed will result in a breach of confidentiality and anonymity with the relevant authorities informed. Confidentiality and anonymity are discussed later in this chapter when discussing the ethical considerations of working with minors.

Another factor considered is my own position within the college organisation. Whilst interviewing junior staff they may not wish to discuss potential 'weaknesses' in their work practice or divulge the truth, particularly to the person who completes their annual appraisal. Rapport, trust and confidentiality needed to be upheld in order to allow staff to relax and 'open up' during the interview/observation process. Any staff members that did not feel comfortable with the process after the initial orientation interviews could withdraw from the study. A similar problem may have occurred if interviewing students that I personally tutor or teach. To mitigate this potential issue I did not include any students in the study that I teach or tutor. As I do not currently teach on the BTEC National Diploma Public Services Programme (BNDPS) this was not a

problem in implementation. This issue was removed through my own progression within the organization during my research where I was appointed to a Senior Management position with no teaching commitment. Whilst this mitigated the possibility of interviewing students that I teach or tutor, it may have worsened/heightened the issues surrounding the researcher/manager relationship.

Insider research – Throughout the design and implementation of my research project a key ethical consideration was my dual role as senior manager at the college site under investigation and my new role as a researcher. From the outset of the study I identified the following issues:

- The subjective nature of researching my own faculty and the potential issue of impartiality.

- The impact of my status as a senior manager on the data collection process.

Insider research requires careful attention, particularly when concerning questions of researcher bias and subsequent validity. The first step to guarding against insider bias is to have an awareness and appreciation of the issues represented in the project from the outset (Murray and Lawrence, 2000). Careful consideration was given to the research design and the approach used. Earlier in this chapter I highlighted my rationale for case study design over action research in an attempt to separate my two roles (manager/researcher). Whilst the intention was to reduce anxiety in faculty staff through providing assurance that my observations and data captured would not directly feed into reactive intervention, the separation of the roles facilitated the adoption of a particular mindset when being the researcher. During the time I spent as a researcher I took steps to look, feel and behave as a researcher (or less like a manager) in order to minimilise the impact of my own subjectivity on the research process. These steps included the removal of my tie, jacket and staff ID badge whilst in the researcher role, using university headed paperwork and identification to emphasize being a post-graduate research student, and meeting staff participants at times and locations of their preference and avoiding my office and

other organization meeting rooms. Whilst this may or may not have impacted the participants perception of the situation, it did help me to detach myself from the 'day job' when conducting my research. The following statement from Maykut and Morehouse (1994) captures the tension knowledge/experience and subjectivity:

> "The qualitative researcher's perspective is perhaps a paradoxical one: it is to be acutely tuned in to the experiences and meaning systems of others – to indwell – and at the same time to be aware of how one's own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand." (p.123)

The second issue for consideration emerged through discussion with my supervisors and a question centred on my status within the college site being researched; 'can staff who report to you say no?' I believe that power relationships are always at play in the workplace (Foucault, 1980; Vine, 2001 and Vine, 2004) and whilst I could not mitigate this issue, I did take steps to reduce its impact as much as reasonably possible. Such as, explaining to the participants of their right to withdraw from the study, my acting of the role of research student, and the locations and timings used for meeting with participants. I also initiated an 'opt in' approach to involvement in my study as opposed to an 'opt out' approach, stating from the outset to potential participants that there was no requirement for them to be involved in my study. I reinforced this message through stating that I could easily adapt my data collection process should there be no interest in participation, and highlighted reasons why it would be difficult to engage in the process (e.g. time). These statements were made to emphasise to staff that it is ok to say 'no' in response to involvement in my research. This is a typical of my management style where I tend to avoid authoritarian and autocratic leadership in favour of a democratic approach.

Insider knowledge can be both useful and problematic. Merton (1972) identifies two opposing positions, the insider doctrine and the outsider doctrine. The outsider doctrine asserts that the outsider is neutral and can achieve an objective account of situations as the researcher is detached and has distance from the subjects of the research. Therefore the outsider is able to hold less prejudice

when surveying conditions (Merton, 1972). In contrast, the insider doctrine asserts that the outsider has a 'structurally imposed incapacity to comprehend alien groups' (p.15), as he/she has not socialized in the group. Therefore the outsider cannot have the 'direct, intuitive sensitivity that alone makes empathic understanding possible' (p.15). In light of both the pros and cons of insider research, it was important to be mindful of the impact of the researcher/manager relationship throughout the research process. Further discussion of the researcher/manager relationship follows in the limitations section of this chapter.

Interviews and informed consent - It is agreed within literature (Byrnes, 2001; Smith, 1992; and Wiles, 2008) that informed consent should be gained from the participant prior to starting any interview process. It is also noted that the participant should also be informed that they are under no obligation to complete the interview and may withdraw at any time. This upfront method of gaining consent from participants can create problems, particularly due to the unpredictable nature of the interviewing process. Allmark *et al* (2009) suggest that interviews can 'probe' unexpected areas and therefore it is difficult to give full information regarding the nature or scope of a particular interview at the outset, hence informed consent is 'problematic'. The main problem with informed consent is its link to anonymity and confidentiality.

Throughout the interviewing process anonymity and confidentiality may be offered to all interviewees and form part of the 'informed' consent to participation. However, as Allmark *et al* suggests, interviews can be unpredictable and there may be times when the personal morals of a researcher will not allow them to maintain confidentiality. Allmark *et al* (2009) suggest a model of 'continuous or process consent' (p.6) where the consent is 'reaffirmed' throughout the interview process. However, as Allmark *et al* continue to suggest, this model of consent can also have problems as interviewees may be 'drawn in the research' with limited information and then feel 'obliged' to continue (2009). This sounds a lot like the 'foot in the door' compliance technique (Burger, 1999; Dillard, 1990; Freedman and Fraser, 1966) and therefore involve knowingly setting someone up through 'successive approximations' (Skinner, 1953) or

more commonly known as 'shaping an outcome' and is linked to theories of conditioning (Peterson, 2004). Researchers may feel morally uneasy about knowingly using a conditioning system on an unsuspecting interviewee and therefore the use of 'process consent' such as asking an interviewee 'can we discuss this in more detail?' must be tainted with the caveat 'remember, you can stop the interview at any time and do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to'. The researcher must tread lightly in these instances.

Another problem with using continuous or 'process consent' is that its successful implementation depends entirely on researcher skill and judgement. What checking processes are usually in place to ascertain if a researcher has the practical interviewing skills and judgement to accurately implement such a technique as 'process consent', how would the researcher know they are 'doing it right'? In many instances research ethics boards simply review an 'ethical plan' or 'ethics section' of a research proposal, and although this will detail (in some instances only outline) the plan for coping with a number of potential issues, it will not evidence how competent a researcher is in practice. The design of this project has been considered by the relevant university ethics committee and has been formally approved. However, it was my moral obligation to better understand the practice of interviewing technique and embedding informed consent in an ethically considered way that led me to discuss the practical perspective in detail with my research supervisors and thus improve my chances of 'getting it right' in practice.

Working with children – Whilst my background in education, experience as a teacher and current role as an education manager has prepared me well for the ethical issues associated with working with children and young adults, there is a need for further consideration of the ethical issues surrounding the research process when involving participants who fall within these categories. This is particularly important with regards to informed consent and protecting the children from harm. In order to justify the approaches I have taken I will draw from work published by the National Children's Bureau (Mclaughlin, 2015) and Heath *et al* (2009) with a specific focus on the concept known as 'Gillick competency' (Gillick v West Norfolk, 1984).

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Children and informed consent – Heath *et al* (2009) state that informed consent in youth research is a 'key issue' and relates to the question of a young person's competency in making up their own minds with regards to involvement in a research project (p.27). In legal terms, the assumption is, that in the absence of specific incapacities, disabilities and or learning difficulties, anyone aged 16 or over is competent to give consent on their own behalf. However, as Heath *et al* (2009) highlights, any research involving minors is a 'grey area' and needs further consideration due to the differing rates of social, emotional and intellectual development of adolescents and the adolescents resultant level of maturity. Within the United Kingdom the capacity of a minor to give their own consent is judged by what has become known as 'Gillick competency'.

Gillick competency is an ethical guiding principle that is used when trying to decide whether a child is mature enough to make their own decisions and refers to a legal case which looked specifically at whether doctors should be able to give contraceptive advice and/or treatment to under 16-year-olds without their parent's consent. Whilst the legal case from which the term and guiding principle emerged is very specific, youth researchers have used Gillick competency to help assess whether a child has the maturity to make their own decisions and to understand the implications of those decisions within a research context (Heath *et al*, 2009). The guiding principle is based on the researcher's judgements of a child's maturity and understanding of the situation of consent and the impact of their decision. Specifically to the Gillick v West Norfolk case, the judgements (in this context made by the doctor) would consider;

> "...whether or not a child is capable of giving the necessary consent will depend on the child's maturity and understanding and the nature of the consent required. The child must be capable of making a reasonable assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of the treatment proposed, so the consent, if given, can be properly and fairly described as true consent." (Gillick v West Norfolk, 1984)

On commencement of my study all participants selected were above 16 years of age due to the investigation being conducted within the post-16 sector, with many of the participants reaching adulthood (18 years of age) within the duration of the study. Whilst the Gillick competency approach was developed

specifically for children under the age of 16, I feel it is well suited to the participants who fell within the 16-18 age bracket during my study and provided an additional layer of safeguarding for these participants. Therefore, with regards to informed consent and whether or not a learner's decision to volunteer to be a participant within the study was accepted, the following questions were considered:

- Has the child been well informed of the scope of the study?
- Has the child been well informed of the data collection process and what this involves?
- Has the child been informed of the likely uses of the data and data ownership?
- Does the child have a level of maturity that gives confidence that they can make well informed decisions?
- Is the child capable of making a reasonable assessment of the potential advantages and disadvantages of participating in the study?

If after careful consideration the answer to all of the above questions is 'yes' and there were no other known reasons to not include the child in the study, and the child was deemed a suitable candidate for participation in the study in line with the sampling process, then they could become a participant.

As this study was conducted within an educational setting a further layer of protection to the participants was evident in the form of a 'gatekeeper'. Heath *et al* (2009) define the gatekeeper as an "adult… charged with the responsibility for making decisions on behalf of the young people in their care, including whether or not to grant access to researchers", and "…gatekeepers have a legitimate and important role in protecting their charges from unnecessary and inappropriately intrusive research" (p.31). Within the context of my study the primary gatekeeper was the Personal Tutor of the BNDPS cohort. At the educational site central to my study the Personal Tutor is the member of staff who is the first point of contact for students, offers pastoral care and support through regular one-to-one meetings with the learners, coordinates any additional educational or pastoral support needs, and closely monitors the learner's well-being and progress whilst at college. All members of staff at the college are trained in safeguarding practice and whistleblowing, however, the Personal Tutor has additional training in these areas to further increase their knowledge,

understanding and competency in safeguarding principles. As an *insider researcher* I have a detailed understanding of the safeguarding practice within the college site and have high levels of confidence in the Personal Tutor's training and subsequent ability to safeguard their learners from potential harm and, if necessary, to intervene following the established safeguarding and whistleblowing procedures. In consideration of this, I approached the Personal Tutor in the first instance regarding my study and fully briefed her on all aspects of the planned data collection and analysis process and associated methods. Following the detailed discussion of my study I asked for permission to approach the BNDPS cohort and if, to the best of her knowledge, there were any students who were not suitable to participate. Any learners that would have been highlighted at this stage would not have been included in my study. Throughout the study I maintained a close working relationship with the Personal Tutor keeping her well informed of the research process and planned research events such as the semi-structured interviews, lesson observations and focus groups. I believe this relationship between gatekeeper and researcher, within the context of an educational environment with well-established safeguarding policies and practice provides an additional layer of protection for participants.

Anonymity and protecting child participants from harm – To better protect the young participants in this study the following steps were taken to secure data anonymity; 1) revision of the approach to data presentation, and 2) removal of or changing of any aspects of the data that could be used to identify the participants. Heath *et al* (2009) explains that anonymity and confidentiality are two important principles when conducting youth research, and may be problematic when working with young people, suggesting that youth research presents additional ethical considerations and is not at all straight forward in one's thinking and preparation. One of the key issues highlighted by Heath *et al* (2009) is that the terms 'confidentiality' and 'anonymity' are often used interchangeably in social research and this can be problematic as they are 'not synonymous'. Heath *et al* (2009) offers the following explanation to give clarity;

> "Anonymity refers to the protection of the specific identities of
> individuals involved within the research process, whereas

> confidentiality refers to promises not to pass on to others specific details pertaining to a person's life: a 'between you and me' sort of approach." (p.34)

Heath *et al* argue that the 'passing on to others of specific details pertaining to other people's lives' (p.34) is an 'integral' part of social research. They continue to explain that due to the very nature of social research, when confidentiality is being offered, very often what is being offered is 'akin to a promise of anonymity'. Heath *et al* (2009) attempts to explain this using the words; "I will report the details of your life, but without letting anyone know that the details relate specifically to you" (p.34). The issue here is that by reporting on the 'specificities of young people's lives' anonymity may be breached as the information reported may be used to identify the participants. The steps taken within my research to minimize issues surrounding anonymity include:

- Using pseudonyms for all participants. The pseudonyms used were in no way linked to the participant's actual names, nick names, or representative of their physical being or any other identifiable characteristic.

- Changing of key moments, activities and actions. Throughout the data collection process participants discussed key memorable events, activities and actions taken in their lives. These events were often vividly described and very unique and often recalled specific places and persons. These richly detailed events would easily identify a participant to any reader who may know them. In these instances the events, names and activities were changed or, if not pertinent to the data presentation, removed.

In addition to these steps I changed my approach to data presentation to further enhance anonymity. During my initial drafts of chapter four of this thesis (presenting data and reporting findings) I introduced the participants through the use of narrative vignettes of the participant's lives as told by the participants themselves. Whilst this approach helped place the reader in the *shoes* of the participant, it also heightened the possibility of the participant being identified. This was mainly due to the use of *sic* (*sic erat scriptum*) within the narratives to reproduce the way in which the participant spoke and thus present the data as

accurately as possible to the source material (transcripts). On reflection, presenting the data in this way added little to the analysis and synthesis of the data within the context of this study and the themes that were the focus of discussion. The narratives were therefore changed to represent the researcher's voice along with changing any identifiable moments, actions, people or places. The decision here is that the end justifies the means, that is, the insight gained from presenting the data as I did initially, paled in value and importance in comparison to the heightened anonymity and therefore protection offered to the young participants involved in my study.

Issues of trustworthiness

Evaluating the trustworthiness of my research credibility, dependability, and transferability – Although Shenton (2004) states that 'many critics are reluctant to accept the trustworthiness of qualitative research' (p.1), extensive work has been completed by Lincoln and Guba (1981, 1989, 1995 and 2000) to create a framework for trustworthiness. Whilst more recent texts (Padgett, 2004 and Silverman, 2011, 2013) build on these platforms, this section will focus on the work of Lincoln and Guba with the following paragraphs detailing and discussing trustworthiness strategies within the three categories of 1) credibility, 2) dependability, and 3) transferability.

Credibility – Lincoln and Guba (1985 cited in Shenton, 2004) state that credibility 'is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness' (p.64). Shenton (2004) adds greater emphasis to the importance of 'credibility' in qualitative research referencing Merriam (1998) in suggesting that credibility is the qualitative researcher's equivalent to the positivist researcher's 'internal validity', that is the level of confidence one has in the accurate recording of the phenomena being studied (Shenton, 2004). The following strategies for increasing confidence in the credibility of this research project were drawn and adapted from Shenton (2004), and applied at the data collection preparation, implementation and review stages of this study. These strategies include:

- *Developing an understanding and familiarization with the study site and participants.* Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend 'prolonged engagement' between the researcher and participants in order to become familiar with the study site, its cultures and to build trust and rapport between parties (Shenton, 2014). Due to my dual role as researcher/manager I already had an extensive knowledge of the history and cultures of Mid-town College and was very familiar with the college site prior to commencing this study and subsequent data collection process. Conversely, as I am highly immersed in the culture of the research site the challenge (for me) is with the issue of overfamiliarity and the potential impact of this on the judgments I make. This issue will be explored in greater detail in the ethics section of this chapter.

- *The use of triangulation.* Another method that was used in order to increase the 'trustworthiness' of this study is triangulation. Triangulation is defined by Cohen *et al.*, (2011) as; 'the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour'(p.112). The quote suggests, this method is used primarily in collecting data concerning 'some aspect of human behaviour' and therefore is perfectly suited to the method of enquiry used within this study. In essence, triangulation is (within a social science context) an attempt to 'map' out or provide greater depth or 'richness' to the complexity of human behaviour, through studying it from more than one 'standpoint' (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Triangulation is often implemented by making use of both quantitative and qualitative data. As this study involves the complexities of human emotions within the primary focus of research, surrounding learning motivation; it may be argued that quantitative methods are inappropriate as they lack the 'richness' and 'quality' needed to explain the complex and detailed depth of human emotion (Sparkes, 1998). For this study the triangulation will consist of using one-to-one semi-structured interviews as well as focus groups and observations of practice. As the varying methods are to be used at different times, 'time triangulation' is also prominent here. This is defined by Kirk and Miller (1986) as 'diachronic reliability or stability over time' (cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p.113). Diachronic reliability looks at how stable the data is over a period of

time. If the data collected has high levels of correlation with a second set of data collected at a different time, then its reliability is said to be increased. Cohen *et al.*, (2011) argues that triangulation helps to overcome the problem of 'method boundedness', a condition predicted by Boring (1953, cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2011), who stated:

> "As long as a new construct has only the single operational definition that it received at birth, it is just a construct. When it gets two alternative operational definitions, it is beginning to be validated. When the defining operations, because of proven correlations, are many, then it becomes reified."

(p.113)

- *Developing rapport for honest and open participant feedback*. Again, this strategy to increase trustworthiness was facilitated by my dual role (researcher/manager). The participants were learners within the faculty I manage and have met me on numerous occasions prior to being involved in this study. These learners were encouraged to be honest and open from the outset and it was explained to them that they will be anonymized within study. In line with Shenton's (2004) approach, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants, along with emphasis on the independent status of the researcher and that they (the participants) have the right to withdraw from the study at any point.

- *Peer scrutiny of my research project.* Due to my closeness to the phenomena being investigated I have engaged in opportunities for peer scrutiny in order to allow peers to challenge the research I had completed at that time and offer their outsider perspective. This feedback was crucial throughout the research process, was gained through discussions with colleagues and during presentations at conferences and provided useful perspectives that led to refinement of my methods.

- *Critical feedback sessions with supervisors.* Throughout my study I have taken the opportunity to discuss my thoughts and ideas with my supervisors. These discussions offered up alternative approaches and new areas for investigation, leading to the widening (and often narrowing) of the scope of my research. These discussions acted as catalyst for further thought and

consideration and to provide differing perspectives and feedback on the approaches taken and resultant developing ideas. Shenton (2004) explains that these meetings provide a 'sounding board' for the researcher to 'test' ideas, approaches and interpretations and help 'the researcher to recognize his or her own biases and preferences.' (p.67).

- *Researcher background and qualifications.* As I am the primary instrument for data gathering during this study it is especially important that I have credibility with the research methodology and methods used. In the case of this study I have experience of completing an extensive dissertation using similar approaches including previously engaging with qualitative research, case study, grounded theory and the various methods that support these including semi-structured interviews, focus groups, thematic analysis, constant comparison, coding and categorizing of data, presentation of data using narrative vignettes. My educational background gives credibility too with a history of working within and with various educational establishments at varying levels including teaching on and curriculum management of BTEC qualifications.

- *Member checking.* For the purpose of this study an adaptation of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) member checking specifications will be used. Member checking involves a process whereby data is tested with the participants from whom the data was originally collected. For this study, participants reviewed their initial interview transcripts for clarity and accuracy and offered feedback for any necessary alterations. Once the alterations were completed the transcripts were again made available for respective participants to review and offer feedback thus further increasing trustworthiness.

- *Thick and rich description of the phenomena under scrutiny.* The use of participant introductions and subsequent researcher voice narratives will allow the reader to understand the experiences of the participants in a rich and detailed way. The rich detail within narratives provides further context to the reader for them to determine if the story 'rings true' (Shenton, 2004).

- *Comparison of findings to previous/related research.* Silverman (2000, cited in Shenton, 2004) suggests that the ability to relate one's findings to the

existing body of literature is 'key' when evaluating qualitative research studies. Prior to starting the data collection process an extensive literature review was conducted. This literature review included key studies pertinent to the topics of value added, learner/learning motivation and learning cultures and the methodologies and methods used. Throughout the data collection process the initial literature review was updated and enhanced as a result of the findings. New literature was brought into scope and others dropped as the emerging themes of the study shaped the continuing direction of the study. This continuing comparison between the existing body of literature and the emerging themes of my research helped firm up the earlier conceptual framework, methodological approach, methods used and strategies to mitigate potential ethical issues, thus being invaluable to increasing the trustworthiness of this study.

Dependability – Shenton (2004) states that the positivist researcher employs techniques to increase the reliability of their study. These techniques often involve systems and structures to support repeatability, that is, if the same data collection methods were repeated in the same context, with the same participants, similar results would be obtained. Shenton believes the issue of replicability/repeatability is problematic with qualitative research as the researchers observations are 'tied to the situation of study' (2004, p.71). This may be particularly pertinent when using interviews due to the myriad possible influences that may have shaped the behaviours and emotions of the participant (and researcher) at the time of data collection, and the extent to how these influences, and behaviours and emotions can develop and change over time. In order to overcome this issue Lincoln and Guba (1985 cited in Shenton, 2004) 'stress the close ties between credibility and dependability', suggesting that 'a demonstration of the former goes some distance in ensuring the latter' (p.71). The earlier section on credibility details the provisions taken to 'demonstrate the former'; whilst this chapter in general will provide the reader with a detailed account of the research practices employed thus developing their understanding of the research project and specifically the data gathering methods.

Transferability – As the findings of qualitative research are often specific to a small study sample it may be difficult to establish if the conclusions made from these studies are applicable to other situations and populations (Merriam, 1998). Whilst there are contrasting views on this (Erlandson *et al*, 1993; Stake, 1994; Denscombe, 1998), I favour Shenton's (2004) argument that 'if practitioners believe their situations to be similar to that described in the study, they may relate their findings to their own positions' (p.69). Taking this idea further, Shenton (2004) reflects on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and offers the following insight:

> "It is the responsibility of the investigator to ensure that sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork site is provided to enable the reader to make such a transfer… the researcher knows only the "sending context", he or she cannot make transferability inferences… After perusing the description within the research report of the context in which the work was undertaken, readers must determine how far they can be confident in transferring to other situations the results and conclusions presented." (p.70)

It is evident here that detail and richness within the contextual elements of the report are important for the reader to be able to gauge the extent of transferability to theirs or other studies. Within this study the following contextual information supports reader transferability:

- A rich and detailed researcher positionality section – presented in Chapter One (p.17).
- A detailed description of the study site – presented in two parts, 1) within the context of policy, the macro, meso and micro influences and their interpretation and reinterpretation and the different levels (see Chapter One section 1.1); 2) as presented in this chapter.
- Contextual information for each participant – presented in this chapter.
- Detailed researcher narratives for each participant – presented in Chapter Four.

The transferability of this research is to be determined by the reader, if in full or part, or if it is transferable at all. Qualitative research is often by its very nature, a

rich and detailed account of a specific phenomenon within a specific setting and with specific participants. In light of this Shenton (2004) questions if 'truly transferable results from a single study is a realistic aim' (p.71).

Limitations of study

Earlier in this chapter I discussed various limitations such as access to the participants and the need to adapt my research methods (and to some extent methodology – moving from life course to an adapted form of life course) to cater for shorter multiple interviews. I have also discussed the broad limitations of qualitative research, such as, the issues surrounding transferability and repeatability. The focus of the following section is to further discuss the limitations of case study research, and most importantly, the implications and potential limitations associated with 'insider research' (Corbin Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). I will also discuss the limitations associated with small sample size, limited data collection, self-selection, self-censorship, and typicality of the sample.

Limitations to case study research - In exploring the limitations of qualitative case study research it has become evident that there is a high amount of cross-over and conflation of issues pertinent to the limitations, ethics considerations, and trustworthiness of this study. It appears that all of these considerations are linked through and are therefore potentially limited by the researcher. The competency of the researcher is important and therefore the pre-requisite qualifications, research history and progression examination criteria that a PhD student has to meet/pass prior to and during their doctoral study provide the baseline expertise for a researcher to understand, and account for the limiting factors associated with research of this type. The researcher can rely on his or her own instincts and abilities throughout most of the research process. Guba and Lincoln (1981) state; "an unethical case writer could so select from among available data that virtually anything he wished could be illustrated" (p. 378). Researcher bias can be an issue here if steps are not taken to account for this

bias, or if this bias perspective is not understood by the reader due to underdeveloped contextual writing within the thesis.

In support of qualitative case studies, Shields (2007) states:

> "The strength of qualitative approaches is that they account for and include difference ideologically, epistemologically, methodologically and most importantly, humanly. They do not attempt to eliminate what cannot be discounted. They do not attempt to simplify what cannot be simplified. Thus, it is precisely because case study includes paradoxes and acknowledges that there are no simple answers, that it can and should qualify as the gold standard." (p. 12)

I agree with Shields. The researcher's unique perspective, however subjective or bias it may appear to be, cannot be 'eliminated' or 'discounted' from the research study when writing the report. To do so would remove a huge amount of contextual information and bring about further issues in terms of its credibility, dependability and transferability. Instead, the researcher needs to write him/herself into the report presenting their researcher positionality to the reader.

My Personal Involvement in FE and the college site - I have worked within FE as a lecturer for eleven years. The last seven years have been at the college where promotion to the post of Curriculum Manager and then Head of Faculty has given me a greater insight into the recording and use of performance data amongst other systems and policies that set the strategic and operational direction of the organisation.

Researcher position and dual roles – Building and/or maintaining rapport, trust and confidentiality was needed in order to allow staff to relax and 'open up' during the interview process. This presented a problem with the dualistic role of manager and researcher. From the outset of the research I asked the question 'will junior members of staff feel comfortable to 'open up and relax' whilst being observed by a member of the senior management team within the organisation they work?'. The potential issue being, that my presence in the classroom during observations may impact the data collection process if the members of staff change their approach.

One of the key strengths of qualitative research methods often lies in the informality of the communication (such as participant interviews) as well as the iterative nature of the research process (Fritz, 2008). This statement presents a conflicting view of the use of interviews in qualitative research. How do we (as researchers) maintain an informal approach to the interview process whilst ensuring that the correct ethical code of practice (BERA) is followed and both researcher and researched are protected and considered? How informal can a researcher actually be when conducting empirical research? Can the researcher take an informal stance when conducting research within their professional organization? When analyzing the data collected will the issue of duel role impact which themes and data are 'left on the cutting room floor?'

Tillmann-Healy (2003) suggests that 'friendship' can be used as a method to build rapport and help the fluidity of data collection when interviewing. Duncombe and Jessop (2002) in their book chapter 'Doing Rapport the Ethics of Faking Friendship', further explore this notion and how far should researchers go to build rapport and collect data. This is certainly an important aspect to consider when the researcher is conducting research within the organisation they work and particularly where there may be a power relationship in place i.e. research conducted (interviews completed) between senior managers and their junior staff. A similar problem may occur if when interviewing students, information relating to the malpractice or even poor practice of teaching staff emerges. Where researcher is completing research within their organisation it may not be appropriate to use the 'faking friendship' technique. This is particularly important within an educational setting that includes minors and vulnerable adults. Therefore this technique was not used within this research. However, the reading around this subject served to highlight the potential issues of building rapport with participants where imbalanced power relationships exist.

Another issue regarding the dualistic role of manager and researcher is the problem associated with hearsay and the exploration of comments whilst maintaining objectivity. Further exploration of certain comments (for example, the conflict between the interviewee and another student of member of staff)

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may result in the appearance of 'taking sides'. This presents problems due to the need to maintain rapport and collect data versus the need to remain objective and free of bias.

A further complication associated with the dualistic role of manager/researcher is whether or not advice is given to any issues that may emerge during the interview. Smith (1992) argues that researchers can intervene as long as the intervention can be morally justified. There appears to be a lot of emphasis in literature regarding the use of one's morals to make decisions on how to move forward with interviews and how to react should a situation emerge. Researchers must tread carefully if using this advice and consider when it is appropriate to switch from researcher back to manager.

Finally, when a dual role researcher is analysing the data collected can they remain objective? Would a researcher risk developing and following a line of enquiry that may jeopardise relationships with staff or show the college in a poor light? A dual role researcher will have multiple sets of loyalties, ambitions and conflicting interests. These will need to be carefully balanced and therefore may impact and even stifle the emergence of the 'truth'.

When completing research using qualitative methods and in particular interviews to collect data there are many ethical issues to consider. Informed consent and confidentiality can be problematic, particularly when considering the exploratory nature of semi-structured interviews. The experience and skill of the researcher is important to ensure 'good judgements' are made during the interview process if using the method of continuous or process consent.

The dual role of manager/researcher is also an important consideration and particularly how this will impact data collection and analysis and in turn impact the 'truth' revealed from the study. It may be suggested that the researcher can never be entirely removed from the study and objectivity is a managed as opposed to natural process. The level of objectivity management may need to be heightened when following a researcher/manager model and will therefore have influence on the 'truth' revealed from the study.

Small sample size – Another limitation of my research is the small sample size of ten participants. Nutt Williams and Morrow (2009) suggest that researchers should present some evidence that adequate quality and quantity of data have been gathered, explaining that "this issue of adequacy of data is often framed as a sample size issue" (p.578). However, whilst highlighting the issue, they do not offer any solution other than researcher judgement and encouraging all researchers to recognise that 'diverse perspectives', from a sample of participants that includes "diversity of demographics or viewpoints will help address the need for rich data… and are likely to provide rich data overall" (p.578). The sample used within my study included ten of a potential 23 learners from the 2010 BNDPS year one cohort. My study focuses on the issue of student motivation relevant to vocational BTEC learners with a specific emphasis on Public Services learners. The problem statement set out in Chapter One of this thesis highlights the potential issue of underachievement in this particular subject area, hence the importance of this research to future Public Services learners, myself as a manager responsible for this curriculum area, and the reputation of Mid-town College in general. My study sample of ten learners were evenly balanced in terms of gender, and came from a diverse mix of academic and social backgrounds. I am confident that I have a sample with the 'diversity' that Nutt Williams and Morrow (2009) indicates as important for data richness, however, the limitations of the specific curriculum subject, vocational educational pathway, and single site (Mid-town College) study need to be acknowledged. The issue here is the perceived lack of generalisability outside of the small study sample (see case study section of this chapter) and representativeness of the study sample (see below).

Johnson *et al* (2007) suggest that data richness may be enhanced through theoretical saturation of data. Nutt Williams and Morrow (2009) state that theoretical saturation "refers to themes or categories that are fully fleshed out" to a point in data collection and analysis where data redundancy occurs (p.578). However, they later point out that due to the "incredible diversity of the human experience, one might ask if true redundancy [of data] is ever possible" and that theoretical saturation is a "somewhat nebulous concept… an ideal for which to

strive" (p.578). I defended my claim for data saturation earlier in this chapter due to my belief that I had reached a point where any further data collection with the ten participants would not lead to the development of new themes or categories pertinent to my research questions. Therefore a further limitation must be acknowledged; the limitation of the researcher being the primary instrument for data gathering. Multiple researchers exploring the same issues with the same cohort may identify different themes from the data. Therefore it is important to emphasize that this thesis is my own personal analysis of the issue.

Whilst highlighting small sample sizes as a limitation to my study I will end this section with a statement from Yardley (2000) who defends small sample sizes through suggesting "many traditional criteria [for quality standards in research] are not applicable [to qualitative research]… it is often preferable to employ 'theoretical' sampling of a small number of people" (p.218) to facilitate in-depth analysis.

 Limited data collection – Gibbs *et al* (2007) suggest that the "limit to data collection is often practical and situational" (p.543). Methodological weaknesses associated with case studies and qualitative research in general have been discussed earlier in this chapter when defending my methodology. Therefore this section will focus on the practical and situational limitations and those associated with the methods used for, and decisions made regarding, data collection.

The data collection period for my research commenced in September 2010 and concluded in May 2011 spanning the first academic year of the BNDPS programme. As the BNDPS programme runs for two academic years the focus of my study is therefore limited to the learners' transition from school to Mid-town College and the initial year of their programme of study. Whilst I have set out the parameters of my study in the opening chapter of this thesis, I acknowledge that collecting data over a short timeframe will limit the yield of data for analysis. Earlier in this chapter I have discussed my claim for theoretical data saturation and explained that there was a point during my analysis where the data became repetitive and that no new themes or categories pertinent to the research

questions emerged. Data saturation may therefore have been supported by the limited amount of data available for analysis. I suggest it is plausible to consider that a learner's thoughts and feelings regarding their educational experience may have changed or evolved over the duration of their programme of study and data collected during the second year of their programme may have facilitated new themes and categories to emerge during analysis.

There were also practical and situational limitations to data collection, and therefore the data yield, in the implementation of methods. Some of the methods used to collect data were not as fruitful as others. Focus groups and lesson observations, whilst yielding some useful data (see Chapter Four, pages 157, 158, 160, 161 and 177), were generally lacking in richness and detail and therefore have a lesser presence within this thesis in comparison to the data collected from semi-structured interviews. I propose that the lack of detail is due to the short 10-15 minute duration of each focus group, constrained by the situational limitation of access to the participants. The BNDPS learners who participated in my study had limited free time between lessons (15 minutes) and I had to make the best use of the limited time available for data collection.

Another situational limitation that constrained data collection was the limited time learners had available to engage in the semi-structured interviews. The participant's lunch hour provided the best opportunity for data collection, however, participants were either unable or unwilling to be interviewed for the entire lunch period leading to shorter 20-30 minute interviews. These shorter interviews may have limited the richness and detail of the data collected in comparison to lengthier one hour interviews.

Whilst I acknowledge these limitations, the practicality of minimizing or mitigating them was somewhat problematic. The situational time constraints of participant access such as, the learners' college timetable and their inability to attend interviews outside of the normal college timetable due to work commitments and transport issues, were compounded by the practical limitations of my role as researcher-manager. Balancing a full time senior management position with the demands of post graduate study and the

impracticality of aligning my available time, outside of meetings and other work related commitments, with the participants' available time was challenging. I therefore look to further research as a possible way of overcoming this limitation and have presented my thoughts on this in the recommendations section of Chapter Six.

Self-selection – Earlier in this chapter I discussed a number of issues related to self-selection and drew comparisons with issues relating to case study research, such as generalizability. I highlighted the importance of researcher judgement in making the final decision regarding the suitability of the study sample and expressed confidence that the ten participants who decided to opt in to my study exhibited the diversity of background necessary to collect high quality data. This section will therefore focus on the limitations of self-selection that may have had an impact on the data collection process, in particular, any possible bias that may be associated with participant self-selection.

A potential issue of self-selection may be the time available to participants to engage with the interviewing process. For example, many BNDPS learners take part in sports enrichment at Mid-town College and therefore are further restricted in their opportunity to take part in interviews before, during and after their timetabled sessions due to training and competition schedules planned during the learners free time periods. Sports and other extra-curricular activities, such as volunteering, are considered important additions to public services students' programmes of study.

Another potential issue related to self-selection may be learner motivation. Are the highly motivated learners more likely to opt in to the study? If this is the case then there is the potential for participation bias, particularly as learning motivation is a key aspect of this study. However, I have collected no data to support this notion and there is just as likely to be a non-participation bias (see below) regarding learner motivation as there is a participation bias.

Typicality of the sample – Whilst recognising that 43% of the cohort at Mid-town College took part in my study, a slightly higher proportion of the BNDPS cohort did not. A limitation may therefore be the typicality of the sample. As stated

above the ten participants who did opt in to the study were of diverse background, covering all key participant categories. Diversity in the key area of prior attainment was evident (see Table 3.1), and along with diverse socio-economic backgrounds and an even gender balance, the cohort who decided to opt in was relevant. The possible limitation regarding the typicality of the sample is more likely to relate to any potential non-participation bias that may have resulted from the cohort who did not take part.

Non-participation bias occurs when the non-participation is related to the outcome investigated, e.g. motivation (Delgado-Rodríguez and Llorca, 2004). The non-participation group included learners who participated in collegiate team sports and therefore could not commit to additional activity that may impact their training or competition schedules. These learners may be highly motivated individuals as they have embraced the extra-curricular activities available to them at Mid-town College. Whilst I have not collected any evidence to suggest this is the case, I think it is important to raise the issue here as a potential non-participation bias, as learner motivation is linked directly to the phenomenon under investigation, and the non-participation group may include some of the most highly motivated learners. To bring balance to the reader's view, it is important to state that there were learners who participated in the study, who competed in collegiate team sports, and yet still decided to opt in to the study.

Self-censorship – I have discussed the issue of self-censorship, within the context of focus groups, earlier in this chapter. I will therefore focus on the remaining two methods of data collection, lesson observation and semi-structured interviews, in this section. During lesson observations there may have been elements of self-censorship from both the learners and teachers observed. Earlier in this chapter I discussed the Hawthorne Effect (Mayo, 1933) and its impact on data collection. Self-censorship may have occurred during lesson observations due to my dual role of researcher-manager and in consideration of the Hawthorne Effect. Teachers may have adapted their approach to exhibit practice they believe their manager is seeking, and learners may have adapted their behavior due to my presence in the classroom. Therefore, the sessions I observed may not have been typical of everyday practice.

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Self-censorship may have also occurred during the semi-structured interviews. Whilst the semi-structured nature of the interviewing process helped to mitigate self-censorship by guiding the participant through use of questioning, there is still opportunity for self-censorship due to the potential imbalanced power relationship that exists during one-to-one interviews (Hennink, 2014). Participants may not wish to reveal any information to the researcher if they believe negative repercussion could ensue, e.g. a learner may not want to reveal potentially useful information about a teacher's pedagogical approach to learner motivation if they believe it may not be seen as positive by the senior manager. This is particularly pertinent to my study and my role of researcher-manager.

It appears that the limitations of small sample size, limited data collection, self-selection, and typicality of the sample may be addressed through expanding the research to include an increased sample of learners over multiple sites and for the full duration of a learner's programme of study. I therefore look to further research as a possible solution (Chapter Six). With regards to the limitations I have highlighted in relation to self-censorship, expanding the study to include multiple researchers, or researchers who are not linked to the site under investigation, may help reduce some of the self-censorship issues I have presented that are pertinent to the dual role of researcher-manager and insider research. Details of my recommendations for further research are presented in Chapter Six.

Chapter summary

In summary, this chapter provided a detailed account of the methodology and methods used in this study. Qualitative case study methodology was used to illuminate the phenomenon of why some learners may not be achieving as highly as expected in education, and in particular, vocational FE courses. The data was collected through three previously identified strands: 1) a critical desk based interrogation of further education policy literature, 2) an adapted form life course research with ten BNDPS students, and 3) classroom observations of teaching and learning practices, with greater emphasis placed on the second strand of the study with strands one and three used to add further context and

enhance dependability and transferability of the findings. The data were reviewed against literature as well as emerging themes in a form of constant comparison. Credibility was enhanced through multiple strategies including triangulation, member checking and detailed contextual description (with emphasis on researcher positionality).

The conceptual framework for the design and analysis of the study was formulated through a detailed and ongoing review of literature. Thematic analysis enabled the identification of the key themes for presentation in Chapter Four (presenting data and reporting findings) and for discussion in Chapter Five (analysis and synthesis of findings). There is an understanding within the writing of this chapter that the researcher, being the primary instrument for data collection, is key in the consideration of trustworthiness, ethical practice and the limitations of this study and that these considerations overlap and are central to the holistic research process.

Endnotes:

1. My study commenced September 2010 prior to the release of the 2011 BERA guidelines. Therefore the 2004 BERA guidelines were considered and applied during the initial stages of my study. Later updated to the 2011 version.

Chapter Four

Presenting Data and Reporting Findings

Introduction

In order to present the findings of my research in a way that captures the 'reality' of the situations/phenomenon being explored, I will, for the duration of this chapter, take on the role of 'storyteller'. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) state that;

> "You, the researcher, are a storyteller. Your goal is to tell a story that should be vivid and interesting while also accurate and credible. In your report, the events, the people, and their words and actions are made explicit so that readers can experience the situation as real in a similar way to the researcher and experience the world of the participants." (p.107)

My story will be told in two parts, the first part concentrating on emotional capital, one of the two most prominent themes that emerged through data analysis. The second part will focus on the stories of individual students and their 'learning cultures' (James and Biesta, 2007), the second most prominent theme to emerge. The data that informed these themes were drawn from 29 semi-structured interviews, ten lesson observations and ten focus groups to build the analysis that follows. The focus on these two themes is justified by their prominence during the thematic analysis. I also believe through completing the literature review (Chapter Two) and data gathering and analysis methods (Chapter Three) these two themes are significant in terms of learning motivation and will provide insight into this phenomenon. Additionally, I believe these two prominent themes have, reciprocally, influenced the development of the contextual and theoretical framework, whilst in turn been influenced by these during the constant comparison process. Both themes will be explored through the use of narrative vignettes as told by me, the researcher, with each vignette introducing the themes and sub-themes of my findings as they are presented, in turn, in this chapter. These themes emerged through using an analytical procedure known as 'content analysis'. Henwood (1996) defines content analysis as;

> "A strategy for arranging and organizing the data into meaningful patterns and arrays and for making logically sound links between these arrangements and the relevant phenomena." (p.34)

Using the procedure of content analysis I was able to identify and organise themes which were relevant or important to my study. The 'themes' presented within this chapter articulate to the research and fieldwork questions outlined in the preceding chapters. Whilst the lesson observations and focus groups did not produce the same quantity of data as the semi-structured interviews, the data was high quality and did support the emerging themes. I will reiterate at this point my initial discussion within Chapter One that highlights how my research questions were prioritised and re-prioritised throughout the course of my study as particular themes came to prominence and required greater attention and space within this thesis. At the same time particular research questions were removed from my study or given lower priority and space. My revised primary research questions are:

1. Why do learners within post-compulsory education studying vocational courses at Mid-town College have a perceived lack of motivation to achieve the level of progress expected as indicated through low value added scores?

2. Can Bourdieu's concepts, specifically 'capital', 'field' and '*habitus*' be used as theoretical and conceptual tools to understand the learners' life courses and help explain their motivation and orientation to learning?

3. What can be learned (teachers, managers, policy makers) about learning motivation through completing this study?

Although my study has refocused with greater emphasis on strand two (life course research approach), the supporting strands (one and three) are still important in defining the context of the study and help position my findings within the political and strategic education landscape that in turn influences the findings presented within this chapter. The supporting questions pertinent to the supporting strands are:

Supporting Questions (*policy*)

1. What national and local policy drivers influence learning motivation within Mid-town College, and in what way?
2. How is educational policy interpreted and enacted by teaching staff?

Supporting Questions (*student motivation*)

3. What factors (past and present) do participants perceive to have affected their progress in studying in FE?
4. What did/do participants perceive to be their main motivators for completing past and present study?
5. What did participants perceive to be the key differences between compulsory and post compulsory education and how these differences may have accounted for their differing levels of achievement in FE?

Whilst these will not be answered in detail here, the earlier section 'setting the scene' (Chapter Three) along with the 'college story' (presented at the end of Chapter One) provides the context needed to understand the findings from a multi-agency perspective and the detail required to set my primary research questions in context. It is also important to note that the detailed analysis of the data linking back to the conceptual framework and literature is presented in the following chapter (Five - Analysis, Interpretation and Synthesis of Findings).

Findings: Section 4.1 Emotional Capital

The overarching theme of 'emotional capital' has been broken down into focused sub-themes. These sub-themes emerged during analysis and collectively form the findings pertinent to discussion surrounding the idea of emotional capital and how this specific form of capital is evident, used, exchanged and has influence on and within educational settings. This section will introduce the sub-themes pertinent to emotional capital. Each sub-theme will be introduced through use of a researcher narrative constructed from the data collected during the semi structured interviews. These introductory researcher narratives will provide a richer more detailed 'pen portrait' of the participants in my study allowing the reader to gain a more thorough understanding of the participant's story and resultant positionality.

The following table (4.1) highlights the findings drawn from the thematic analysis. Whilst all are presented in the table to provide completeness in representation of the thematic analysis, some themes were more prominent than others. Therefore only the most prominent and useful sub-themes will be

presented in further detail following the table. These 'key' findings will form the basis for discussion in Chapter Five section 5.1.

Table 4.1 Summary of Findings for Sub-themes Pertinent to 'Emotional Capital'.

Emotional Capital	
Sub-theme	Key Findings
4.1.1. Social aspects	Integration into social groups, the social aspect associated with college, and the need for friendship and belonging is seen as a higher priority than learning [whilst at college] for some learners.
4.1.2. Teacher more important to learner than subject when deciding subject options	A learner's perception of a teacher's personality and/or approach to teaching can have a significant impact on the learner's progress and early career pathway choices with some students showing loyalty when deciding their subject options to teachers with whom they have a positive relationship.
4.1.3. Prestige	Some learners are motivated by the prestige, kudos and status associated with being high performers in the 'top sets'.
4.1.4. Influence of significant others	Family and close friends can have a significant impact on learners' career and education choices.
4.1.5. Importance of college as a social network	The social network developed by students at college can have a significant impact on their attendance rate to college and the spaces in which to socialize are seen by students as highly important aspects of the college experience.
4.1.6. Critical incident	Critical incidents can have a significant impact on a learner's motivation and career/educational pathway and the emotional capital associated with critical incidents may diminish over time.
4.1.7. Perception of future careers	A learner's perception of their chosen career path has a significant impact on their motivation to progress towards that career path.
4.1.8. An informal approach	Learners' perceive college to be less formal than school with greater equality between staff and students and this leads to a more respectful and friendly environment.
4.1.9. Humour	Learners' believe humour is highly important to learning motivation and learning and they learn more/better when enjoying a session due to the involvement of humour.
4.1.10. The personalized approach	Recognition of the learner as an individual is highly important to learner motivation, from the learner's perspective, particularly if a tutor has knowledge of a learner's interests and hobbies.
4.1.11. Teacher positivity	Learning motivation increases if the teacher displays positive behaviours.

As stated above, table 4.1 presents a summary of all of the sub-themes pertinent to the overarching theme of 'emotional capital' that emerged during the thematic analysis of data. However, due to the limitations associated with the presentation of this thesis not all of these sub-themes will be given their own space in this chapter (four) or discussed in detail in Chapter Five. As a researcher I had to make decisions with regards to the data that is given space and prominence within this thesis. The sub-themes given further space in this chapter are those that I believe are most pertinent to my primary research questions and are rich in detail. The two prominent sub-themes pertinent to the overarching theme of emotional capital that I will focus on are social aspects (4.1.1) and critical incidents (4.1.6). Whilst the other sub-themes have not been given their own space in this chapter, they are used as 'supporting sub-themes' due to their interconnectedness. This is discussed further at the beginning of Chapter Five.

Sub-theme 4.1.1: Social Aspects

The social aspect of education was a strong theme within the data collected. It was evident that social status, integration, acceptance, belonging, etc. are significant factors to consider when exploring a student's progress in education. The following statements highlight the importance of the 'social network' to the participants.

Introducing Claire Black 'A learner who enjoys and values the social aspect of education'

> Claire attended a Primary School in a nearby town before moving closer to the local area where she now lives. Claire believes the move was not a good experience because she did not maintain contact with her previous friends and classmates and found it difficult to make new friends at her new school. In the new school everybody had made their friendship groups and Claire found it difficult to break in to these groups.

> In year six of school Claire had a particularly bad year, she was being bullied and had no friends. Her peers turned against her as she 'did not fit in' and her life at school was miserable. Fortunately, the situation was spotted by a member of teaching staff, a year six tutor, who helped Claire through this difficult time. The tutor encouraged Claire to continue to engage in her studies at school by talking to her at break and lunch times so that she was not feeling alone or isolated. Claire has had many teachers throughout her educational career, some have been

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effective or 'good' and some considered to be ineffective or 'bad' in terms of her learning progress. Claire believed the 'bad' teachers were those who looked down on her and did not accept her as an equal individual. Claire understood the importance of 'getting on' with the teacher, and explained that she performs better in sessions and achieves better results when there is a positive relationship with the teacher. Claire believes she got good GCESs in the subjects where she 'got on' with the teacher.

A standout feature of school for Claire was the year eleven ball, she enjoyed this social activity and has good memories of the night and her friends. The social side of school was really important for her. Claire believes that planned activities, such as field trips are extremely motivating as there is a chance to learn in a group setting. She really liked the 'Army look at life' course she completed at the start of her BTEC programme because she bonded well with all her peers as a group and found the practical and social activities enjoyable. She got to experience the camp, its scale, and experience many Army activities. Claire values the experience and explains she would never have had such an experience if she was not studying at college.

Claire was not accepted onto the level three course at first, she was downgraded to the level two course because she did not achieve the entry grades required for the level three programme. This knocked her confidence, though after a few days on the level two course her tutor spoke to her and explained that there was a chance that she could still start the level three programme. Claire explained that the tutor was really supportive and encouraged her onto the higher level course and gave her a one week trial to see if she could cope. Claire embraced the opportunity and did very well, her initial report was the best she ever had. This really motivated her to get the 'best grades ever'.

Context within thesis – Claire's story emphasizes the importance of the teacher-student relationship during critical times such as moving schools, being bullied and when she did not achieve the entry grades required to enrol onto her first choice course at college. Her story has a strong focus on the *significant others* who have provided support during these critical times. Claire achieved 'good grades' in the subjects where she had a good relationship with her teacher. The link to Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital and the transactional process between relationship and grade outcome is clear here.

Claire reiterates the importance of the 'social side' of the school experience:

"The social side of school was really important for me."

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In addition to the influence that the 'social aspect' can have on one's progression within education, there is also a direct link evident between the social aspect of past education and a learner's motivation to participate in education. The following statements by other participants capture the learners' perspective.

Chris highlights the importance of 'the social aspect' within the context of leisure activity completed during timetabled breaks in the school day, he states:

> "I enjoyed school, I enjoyed the social aspect, playing football with friends at break and all. I think the social aspect is really important because if you don't know anyone and are not friends with anyone then you won't want to go in very much."

Jenny reflects on her moving schools and the importance of establishing friends:

> "When moving to different schools the learning side doesn't bother me, it's like, the finding friends bit that is important. If I don't at least have one friend then I don't feel like I fit in or anything."

Jack speaks of his fond memories of school and refers to 'the social aspect', he states:

> "I have good memories [of school], mostly friends and things, the social aspect is what I remember."

Jenny comments on being bullied at college and the impact of the bullying on her motivation to attend, she states:

> "Earlier this year, I won't mention names, there was a girl bullying me. She still kinds of does it though not as bad. I told her to leave me alone. I spoke to the teachers about it and everything though for the first month I was here I didn't want to come to college at all. Like even some times on Friday she was down on the second floor, and I was just not in the mood to go and sit down there or anything, eventually we did. She left, but people like her. I get intimidated quite easily."

Jenny continues:

> "All the teachers were so good. I don't think she would have stopped me coming to college full stop though it would have been negative like urrgh I don't want to go in like [*sic*]."

Claire highlights the importance of group bonding. Again, this emphasizes the student's perspective of the importance of the social aspect of education to the learner:

> "I really liked the Army look at life course we did at the start of the
> year because we all bonded well as a group and it was really fun."

This statement from Claire is reinforced by the following statement from Lucy
which continues to highlight the importance of group cohesion:

> "I think the social side of College is important. It wasn't until we did
> our first outdoor pursuits session about two weeks in that I felt part of
> the group. The session was really good as it made us all work together
> and was fun. I usually stick to myself though as I like my own space,
> but it is still important to have friends at college."

My observations of the participants during lesson observations support the
participant statements. I observed a strong social bond between participants
within the BNDPS cohort. When observing the start of one session and students
arriving, initial discussion between participants related to social activities that
have recently taken place, e.g. a tackle made in a rugby fixture.

Building on the theme relating to the importance of the social aspect of education
as a motivator of learning for past study, the following comments refer to the
importance of college as a social network in relation to the learners' current
study.

Sam speaks of meeting new people, he states:

> "I also like meeting new people and I have met lots of new people on
> the course. I like the social aspect of things."

Sam continues:

> "The social experience has been good so far, I like the areas around the
> college like the cafeteria down the bottom and like that you can sit
> down with people and that."

Referring to the influential people in his life, Jack states:

> "The most influential people on my life to date are my friends, the
> social side of things are really important to me and I like college
> because I have some really good friends here."

Ben highlights the importance of the 'social side of education':

> "I believe friendship and the social side of education is the most
> important."

During a focus group discussion Ben commented on the start of lessons:

> "I like the start of lessons, when you first arrive in the morning because you see your mates and talk about what went on during the weekend. I hate Mondays but I like taking about the weekend before sessions start."

During the same focus group discussion Claire added:

> "It's a chance to catch up face to face… John (teacher - pseudonym used) will give us five minutes or so to discuss things before we start."

Chris discusses his motivations to attend college:

> "My main motivations for coming to college and learning is the social aspect, meeting friends, to help me with the career choice and the main reason is that I enjoy the course. If I didn't enjoy the course I wouldn't come to college.

Supporting Sub-theme 4.1.2: Teacher over Subject

One learner stated that she chose the teacher when making her GCSE options as opposed to the subject. This interesting statement highlights the importance of the student perception of 'good teaching' or even a 'good teaching personality' when they make decisions that shape their progress within education. The statement also suggests there is a form of loyalty to the teacher.

Introducing Jenny Clarke 'A girl from 'up North' who picked the teacher as opposed to the subject when deciding her GCSE options'

> Jenny used to live up North, close to the Scottish border, and moved down to the local area about seven or eight years ago. Therefore she did not attend any primary schools in the South West of England. When moving to different schools the learning aspect was less of a concern to Jenny and friendship was most important. If she did not at least have one friend then she felt that she would not fit in.

> Jenny explained that there have been times at school and college when she has been bullied. It still happens on occasion, though it is not currently as bad and Jenny has taken steps to resolve the issue. She spoke to the teachers about it during her first month at college as it was affecting her studies and she did not want to continue her college course. The bullying had an impact on the social aspect of college for Jenny as she would avoid certain areas of the college where social groups gathered for fear of confrontation with the bully. Jenny is intimidated quite easily, though her friends at college provide a strong support network. Following one incident of bullying Jenny contacted one of the teachers who was supportive and helpful. All of the teachers

who taught Jenny were made aware of and monitored the situation, which subsequently improved for Jenny.

The impact of teachers on Jenny's education to date has been significant with regards to her choice of subjects and chosen educational career path. Jenny highly values her relationships with teachers. Her favourite teacher from her past education experiences was a languages teacher. She was one of the nicest ladies Jenny had ever met, bubbly and chatty and gave Jenny a lot of support with her learning. Jenny described her as 'so nice and never negative'. In contrast, Jenny describes her year tutor at school as 'always in a bad mood' and that this mood negatively impacted the learning environment. Reflecting on the better teacher Jenny believes it was her personality that made the sessions so enjoyable and valuable, and if she had a similar session with another member of staff it would not be as good. Jenny explained that this was the reason she chose to study languages, because she liked the teacher. Jenny explained that she improved so much in her languages because she enjoyed going to the sessions. She achieved top marks in her coursework and attributes her success to the support and approach from her teacher. Jenny describes her as a teacher that she did not want to let her down, because she helped Jenny so much that Jenny felt obliged to give her best effort.

The worst teacher Jenny ever had was a maths teacher. Jenny explains that she could have done so much better in maths. Jenny explains that her maths teacher constantly shouted at the learners. She described his teaching as 'rubbish' and stated that if her languages teacher could teach maths she would have achieved higher grades. Jenny believes that the purpose of education is about getting the best out of someone, making them achieve the best they can. She attributes success to being happy. She explains that qualifications and happiness are of equal importance. Whilst at school Jenny did not attend any lessons that she did not enjoy.

Context within thesis – Jenny's story highlights the importance of friendship and the social aspects of her educational experience. She highlights a critical incident (bullying) and how this may have been a negative experience without tutor intervention. The importance of significant others (peers and teachers) is evident throughout Jenny's story with links to emotional capital (Zembylas, 2007).

A supporting theme to emerge from the data in relation to a learner's perception of the most motivating behaviours exhibited by teachers is the use of humour in sessions. The following statements from other participants highlight the importance of humour in relation to learner motivation, attendance and learning.

Sam refers to a lecturer who used humour during sessions and that these sessions were 'relaxed and friendly' and that he 'got a lot of work done and learned stuff':

> "There's this one guy who done Greek and he came to school half way through and he is a new teacher and no one really knew him so like after a while he got in everyone's good books. He's a really funny guy you could have a joke with him, but when it came down to learning he always talked straight. His sessions were relaxed and friendly but we always got a lot from them, got a lot of work done and learned stuff."

Sam continues, reflecting on another teacher:

> "Another teacher was Mr. Green my Critical Thinking teacher, he came in half way through the year as well. He quickly got us into his good books, he done some impressions in class, which were funny and I think he won the teacher of the year award. He was a new teacher and everyone loved him you know. He knew when to joke, when everyone was in that kinda mood and knew when to get serious and like get on with the work."

Laura refers to a 'brilliant' teacher who has 'humour':

> "The best teacher I ever had is Bob here at College, he gets the classes attention, he's brilliant, he's got all the information, he is interesting and he has humour."

During one lesson observation I witnessed Bob interacting with two learners. He used different accents when telling stories of his past experiences in the forces to emphasise a learning point. The learners appeared to enjoy this type of interaction.

During the focus group session that followed both Jack and Laura commented positively about the humour used by Bob with Laura stating:

> "I will remember the story because of the funny accents, they stick in your mind because they're funny."

Jack refers to a past teacher, stating that he was 'friendly and jokey':

> "The standout teacher I can remember, the best teacher was Mr. White who taught Geography, he was friendly and jokey."

Jack continues, referring to a teacher at college:

> "The best member of staff at College for motivating learners is Bill. He is funny and he gets us to do the work in sessions and we complete the coursework in his sessions and they are fun."

Ben speaks of the importance of enjoyment in sessions:

> "The best teacher I ever had was Mr. Brown because he was always joking around. I found that I learned a lot though I enjoyed it as well and this was good. He made it fun. Other teachers would go for the hard working and not joke around. I wanted to go to his sessions because I enjoyed them."

Chris suggests that levels of enjoyment may impact learning:

> "I also like teachers who are fun and have a laugh as well. I learn more when I am enjoying the session."

A second supporting theme to emerge from the data in relation to a learner's perception of the most motivating behaviours exhibited by teachers is the importance learners place on the teacher displaying a personalised approach, that is, one-to-one discussion and support for learners and the recognition of them as individuals not a collective.

Sam speaks of a teacher from a past school:

> "Other teachers didn't do this but he like made an effort to get to know you. He would like know your brothers and sisters around the school and would like joke with you and stuff. I thought that was quite important because I got a good friendship going like and I tend to respect him more and listen to him more. He would like, if someone was misbehaving would say 'I'll get your brother to give you a clip around the ear' and like joke about it and it would kinda work."

Jenny reflects on a teacher from a previous school:

> "...she would put all her effort and time into the students and made sure that everyone got the best possible. It was her as a person; if I had a similar session with another member of staff it wouldn't be as good."

Jenny continues, referring to the same teacher:

> "I got like top marks in all my coursework and everything and ended buying her a present for helping me. She wouldn't stop until you got the best possible, I don't know it's like... She was so nice to each individual student, she wouldn't have favourites, she was nice to everyone in the class. She is the sort of teacher that I didn't want to let her down, because she helped you so much that you wouldn't want to let her down."

During a focus group discussion Jenny made a similar comment:

> "Bill knows how to motivate you. His sessions are always fun but he still teaches you loads. He's firm but fair."

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Claire talks of the relationship she had with a teacher at a previous school:

> "In year six I had a bad year, I was being bullied and had no friends at school, they went against me and my year six tutor really helped me, she made it easy for me to go to school by talking to me at break time and lunch time and that so that I wasn't on my own."

Lucy speaks of a past teacher from school and how he helped her with individual support:

> "...he would like help with the little things like, I was bad with my organization and he would help organize my file."

Lucy then speaks of her experience with FE teachers:

> "I think the lecturers at college are good because they have been in the public services and know what life is like in the Army, Police. I go to Nadine all the time to ask her things about the Army and she is really helpful and can tell me from experience what certain things are like. You kind of trust what they are saying more because they have been there and done it."

Laura reflects on a lecturer who teaches her at college:

> "He also has a lot of patience with people in class, he will just come up to you and help, he notices when you are stuck on something and will encourage you to work. Individual encouragement is key to being a good teacher, helping people individually."

Laura continues:

> "I think Bob is on our level, he understands what we like doing and how to make the sessions enjoyable. Some teachers are past it, they are old fashioned and they don't really get us, they are not on our level. I hate it when teachers say they will do something and don't follow through."

Jack speaks positively of a past school experience and building a relationship

with his teachers:

> "I got to know the teachers because they keep you with the same teachers over the years so you get to know them really well. This was important for me as it helped me with my confidence."

Chris favours the personal approach to teaching, he states:

> "She used to sit with you and help you with stuff and take time and effort with you. Some of the other staff were nowhere near as good, I have been in subjects where I'm just copying stuff down. The one-to-one personal approach is better."

Another supporting theme to emerge from the data in relation to a learner's perception of the most motivating behaviours exhibited by teachers is the importance of teacher positivity, that is, teachers exhibiting positive behaviours. The following statements highlight the behaviours most favoured by the participants.

Jenny speaks of her favourite teacher from a previous school:

> "My favourite teacher was my languages teacher at White School. She was called Mrs. Blue and she was one of the nicest ladies I have ever met. She was so bubbly and chatty. She helped me so much in my languages she was so nice. She was never negative, like my tutor was always in a bad mood and reflected it on the students, when she was miserable she would make the students feel miserable, but, if Mrs. Blue was having a bad day she would still be really nice, she always said interesting stuff. Even if it was like coursework, she would still make it interesting. She was just a better teacher."

Jenny continues, highlighting the importance of the teacher when selecting her GCSE options at school:

> "She was really happy and laughed all the time. That's the reason I chose to do my languages, I did German and French GCSEs and that's the reason I did it. In a way I chose the member of staff and not the subject when making my options as I did not want to not have her as my teacher."

Jenny continues:

> "I think it is all about the teacher, it's like if you don't enjoy something then... Enjoyment is important. I improved so much in my languages because I enjoyed going to the sessions."

Jenny then reflects on a different teacher and compares him to Mrs. Blue:

> "...he constantly shouts all the time, I hate when teachers do that, like fair enough when you got to, but he just wasn't a good teacher at all. The way he taught everything was just rubbish. If Mrs. Blue delivered his session they would be so much better, it's like, if a teacher is really happy and not chatty though speaks to the class and then gets down to work it makes it enjoyable and then the students are going to like, obviously want to take part in everything."

Claire reflects on her relationships with teachers at school and how this impacted her grades at GCSE:

"I think it is important to get on with the teacher, if I get on with the teacher I enjoy the subject more and I do better and get better results, that's what happened in my GCSEs, I got good grades in the subjects where I got on with the teacher."

Lucy speaks of a teacher from a past educational experience:

"The best teacher I ever had for motivating me to learn was an English teacher I had, he was really good. Say, if you were having a bad day, he was really understanding and would be really supportive and would push you to achieve without nagging you."

Lucy continues, referring to the same teacher:

"He would also praise you if you answered a question even if you didn't get it completely correct, he would praise you anyway. I think it is important to praise people."

Ben refers to mutual enjoyment of the session of both student and teacher:

"I think his lessons were good because he enjoyed them as well. He enjoyed teaching, he was friendly and interested in the students. Because he enjoyed it, we all enjoyed it."

Supporting Sub-theme 4.1.4: Influence of Significant Others

Another strong emerging theme is the influence of significant others, particularly close family such as parents and grandparents, on a learner's choice of career and resultant progression through education and motivation to study a Public Services programme.

Introducing Natalie White 'A girl who wants to follow in her parents footsteps and join the forces.'

Natalie chose to study Public Services because she wants to follow a career in the RAF. Her parents were in the Navy and this close link to the armed forces has had a significant influence on Natalie's chosen career path. Natalie is a member of her local Air Cadets and holds the rank of sergeant. This has given her additional insight into the forces and she has enjoyed the level of responsibility that comes with the role. Natalie wants to continue the forces lifestyle.

The most memorable experience in her life to date was when she got her sergeant stripes at cadets. When she got the rank she was more motivated to think about a career in the forces. As a sergeant she had a lot more responsibility, and this motivated her. Natalie explained that she likes 'being in charge of people'.

Natalie's Mother supports her decision to be in the cadets as she was in the forces too. She is always pushing Natalie to join the forces. Natalie's whole family have strong links to the armed forces. There are members of her family who have served in different military roles. Natalie has heard stories of life in the armed forces and this has motivated her to follow a forces career herself. Natalie believes that 'everybody likes the forces'.

Context within thesis – Natalie's story shows how important significant others can be in key decision making processes such as career and education choices. Emotional capital is evident here with similarities to Reay's (2000) idea of 'emotionally valued assets' (p.572) where the emotional investment from parents and grandparents has been an important factor to Natalie's chosen career pathway. The importance of significant others in relation to emotional capital will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five (analysis, interpretation and synthesis of findings).

Natalie reflects on the stories told by her parents and grandparents, she states:

"My Mother likes it that I'm in the Cadets as she was in the forces and she is always like pushing me to do it, she supports me doing it. My whole family are like forces people. There are members of my family who have been in the Army and RAF and Navy. I heard my Mum's stories and my Granddad's stories and wanted to go into the forces. Everybody likes the forces."

Highlighting the importance of parental support Jenny states:

"The most inspirational person in my life is my mother. She has always been there for me and I love her to bits. She is nice to me no matter what, even if I'm horrible to her. My parents are definitely key people in my life. My parents fully support my careers choices."

Claire speaks of her parents' indication of her suitability for her chosen career:

"My parents are really supportive of me wanting to go into the Police and have been looking on the website with me and they even said when they read the bit about dog handling that the job was definitely 'me'. They are behind me."

Lucy speaks of the support she receives from parents and grandparents:

"My mum and dad have always supported me in my decision to go for the Army as a career and my gran and granddad are really behind me, they are as excited about me joining the military as I am. I have loads of respect for people who puts their lives on the line for others and it is really important that there are people out there who want to do that."

Chris highlights the importance to him of parental acceptance regarding his chosen career:

> "I changed my mind about me career and then wanted to join the Army, but my mum was against this and then I thought I would like to join the RAF. My mum thinks the RAF is fine."

In addition to the influence of friends and family, careers advisors may be considered significant others at points in a learner's educational pathway. It is evident from the following statements that the advice received from a careers advisor is highly influential to a learner's educational progression pathway.

Reflecting on careers advice received at school, Sam states:

> "While at Blue School we had lots of discussions with a career manager and she talks to every student privately and whilst talking to her she asked what you kinda like then after talking to her for a while she saw that I wasn't like so much into the media and that I could do other things and that's when I started looking at other options I was quite good at media I got a B grade which was one of the reasons that I decided to look at a media career. And I enjoyed English and there was a part of English that taught us about advertising and I quite liked that and that's when I thought oh there's an entire subject about it, so then I thought I'll go into that. My success in the subject played a role in what I thought I wanted to do next."

Sam continues:

> "We had a careers event and I went and talked to some of the people, and cos my careers manager recommended the public services kinda thing I went and talked to the police down there, I think it was Avon Constabulary, I had a little talk to them and they told me how to get in, all about the job, and then it started to appeal to me more and more. It sounded very exciting and I thought that was the job for me."

Natalie refers to a meeting she had with a recruitment team:

> "The main reason I chose the BTEC is because I spoke to the recruitment team and they said I could still go in as an officer because it is equivalent to two A-levels. I originally picked A-levels because it would be better as a fall back if I didn't want to go in. Now that I know I definitely want to go in I think that the BTEC is the best option. I think that BTEC is as good as A-levels, it depends on the BTEC and the level."

Lucy highlights a key memorable moment in her past education:

> "The most memorable moment of school was my leaving day because I got a three page letter which mentioned where I could go in the future and what I'm good at, it was really positive. I still have it on my wall now."

Lucy continues:

> "I want to go to university and I'm thinking about doing the Uniformed Services degree course. I'm going to the Army careers office in a couple of weeks to discuss which course would be best suited for officer entry."

Sub-theme 4.1.6: Critical Incidents

Whilst conducting a semi structured interview with one participant, a statement concerning a critical incident that happened in the participant's past emerged. It was evident that this critical incident, which referred to the death of a significant other, had a strong influence on, and motivation for the participant to change their career pathway and follow a new education progression route. Due to the uncommon nature of this critical incident this sub-theme is less supported than the other themes presented in this chapter. This is because the critical incident is unique to this learner. As the story presented below is highly important to Laura's learning motivation I believe it should have space in this chapter. Drawing on Flyvberg's (2006) recommendations (see Chapter Three, p.81-82) I believe this one unique story can be justified in its inclusion here. The data used to inform Laura's story were collected using only the semi-structured interview method.

Introducing Laura Small 'A beauty student who decided to change her career path after a critical incident in her life'

> The reason Laura started the BTEC National Diploma Public Services course was because her boyfriend died around eight months ago [before the start of the course] in a car accident. In addition, Laura witnessed her friend being spiked [when an alcoholic beverage is covertly mixed with another to increase its potency] when she first started going out, her friend ended up in hospital in a critical condition and since then Laura feels like the emergency services was her 'calling' in life. Since these two critical incidents Laura has had ambitions of following a career path where she can help people and save lives. In particular, Laura wanted to follow a career in the Fire Service. She

thinks she has got a good chance of passing the entry tests as she is physically fit and enjoys practical activity. Laura has not always wanted to be a Fire Fighter; it came about as an option after the critical incidents stated above.

Laura has previously studied Beauty Therapy at College, she completed the level two and three courses and then enrolled onto the BTEC Public Services programme. She had to pay to study the Public Services course because she was 20 years of age at the point of application and had already completed a BTEC level three course. Laura feels that Public Services is a lot different to Beauty. She believes she has 'gone up the scale', from wanting to 'beautify' people to wanting to help people and save lives. Laura explains that she can always fall back on a career in beauty in the future if needed because she has the qualifications.

Context within thesis – Laura's story focuses on a strong emotional response to a critical incident. Whilst the link to Zembylas' (2007) concept of emotional capital is evident here, there is also a strong link to Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital and the value of different cultural capitals within the social arena, i.e., Laura's perception of the difference in value between Beauty Therapy and Public Service work.

Laura refers to the incident in relation to her decision making process when considering how to progress in education and employment:

> "The reason I started this course [BNDPS] was because my boyfriend died around eight months ago. Since then I wanted to save lives. In addition, I saw that my friend got spiked when we first started going out, she was in a bad way and since then, I just feel like it was my aim, my calling in life, to help people. I left college after completing my Beauty course and then it was when my boyfriend died and I didn't really do anything for a while because I was grieving I didn't do anything, work or College. I then wanted to get back into education and decided on the Public Services route."

Laura continues:

> "I want to be in the Fire Service. I think I got a good chance of getting in because I'm female and there's not many out there so I got a good chance. My family are encouraging me to join the Fire Service too. I haven't always wanted to be a Fire Fighter; it just came about as an option after these incidents."

Approximately six months after completing the semi-structured interview with Laura that led to the above statements Laura decided to leave the public services course (after finishing the first year of study) and revert to pursuing a career in

beauty therapy. Laura explained that she was 'emotionally motivated' at the time she made her decision to join the programme and now that she has come to terms with her loss she feels she needs to follow her 'true passion'.

Findings: Section 4.2 Learning Cultures

As with section 4.1, the overarching theme of 'learning cultures' has been broken down into focused sub-themes. These sub-themes emerged during thematic analysis and collectively form the findings pertinent to discussion surrounding the idea of learning cultures and their influence on learning motivation within educational settings. This section will introduce each of the sub-themes pertinent to learning cultures. Each sub-theme will be introduced through the use of a researcher narrative constructed from the data collected during the semi-structured interviews, lesson observations and focus group discussions.

The following table (4.2) highlights the key findings drawn from the thematic analysis. Following the same format to section 4.1, and for completeness, all themes pertinent to 'learning cultures' that emerged during the data analysis are presented in table 4.2, however only the most prominent themes are presented in detail following the table. These 'key' findings will form the basis for discussion in Chapter Five section 5.2.

Table 4.2 Summary of Findings for Sub-themes Pertinent to 'Learning Cultures'.

Learning Cultures	
Sub-theme	Key Findings
4.2.1. Opportunities to Achieve	Prior attainment and other learning opportunities (or lack of) that have been created by, or presented to the learner significantly impacts their opportunity to progress in education.
4.2.2: Disruptions in Education	Disruptions in education such as moving house and changes in staffing can hinder learning motivation and progress in education. The primary factor being the increase in the number of life issues the learner has to cope with. However, Disruptions in education that are well managed can have a positive impact on motivation and progress.
4.2.3: Education Setting	Particular cultures pertinent to certain settings such as religious cultures within a religious school can have a

	significant impact on a learner's motivation to learn and progress in education.
4.2.4: Previous Qualifications/Grades	A learner's previous qualifications and grades achieved can significantly impact their progression pathway in education.
4.2.5: Chosen Career	Learners completing the BTEC Public Services qualification appear to have clearly defined career pathways and recognize the direct link between the course and their chosen career.
4.2.6: Most Suitable Course Content/Type	Learners chose the BTEC pathway as opposed to A-levels due to perceiving a greater vocational relevance to their chosen career and that the course is better suited to their practical learning style.
4.2.7: Assessment Preference	Learners chose the BTEC pathway as opposed to A-levels due to the assessment methods used. Preferring coursework assignments rather than exams.
4.2.8: Careers Advice	Advice received from a careers advisor highly influences a learner's educational progression pathway.
4.2.9: Goal Outcome Oriented	Students studying the BTEC National Diploma in Public Services appear to be goal oriented and are motivated by the knowledge of their progression on the course.
4.2.10: An independent learning environment	Learners perceived the college environment to be more mature than school, better promotes independent learning, and offers more control regarding the progress they make.
4.2.11: The learner's perception of the BTEC Extended Diploma in comparison to A-Levels	Learners believe that A-levels are 'harder' and 'better' than BTECs, viewed more favourably by employers and that BTEC programmes are more practical (taught through practical 'hands-on' activities).

As stated above, table 4.2 presents a summary of all of the sub-themes pertinent to the overarching theme of 'learning cultures' that emerged during the thematic analysis of data. However, due to the previously mentioned limitations of this thesis not all of these sub-themes will be given their own space in this chapter or discussed in detail in the following chapter (five). The sub-themes that are presented in greater detail in the following section are those I feel are most pertinent to the primary research questions. The two most prominent sub-themes are disruptions in education (4.2.2) and assessment preference (4.2.7).

Sub-theme 4.2.2: Disruptions in Education

A strong theme to emerge that relates to a learner's progress within FE is any disruptions to their learning they may have experienced. The learners participating within my study had varying levels and types of disruption to learning as evident in the following researcher narrative and subsequent participant statements.

Natalie White 'A girl who started down the A-level route and then decided to study a BTEC programme'

> Natalie used to live in a city with her mother, biological father and older brother. Following her mother and father's separation she moved to a suburban town with her mother, stepdad and his two children. Her mother and stepdad had another two children; increasing the family to seven.

> Natalie has experienced a few house moves during her life to date. From birth until the age of seven she lived in a city in the midlands, from seven until present she has lived in a town locally. Natalie explains that the city location where she previously lived was 'quite dangerous' in comparison to where she lives now. She had to be chaperoned by her brother when travelling around the town, and living in the South West is 'quieter'. Both the society and education sites where she used to live in comparison to where she lives now are very different. The main difference was that the schools in the city were very big. Natalie explained that the class sizes in the schools in the local area are a lot smaller and believes having fewer pupils in class is better. Her rationale for this is that the teacher has more time to spend with individual pupils, and this is very important to learning. Natalie explained that she achieves far better results if she has greater contact and support from the tutor. She believes that the level of support received during sessions is an important factor to successful learning.

> Natalie initially wanted to join the forces as an Officer, therefore, she studied A-levels in English, Media Studies and Sociology as she believed this would support her application for officer entry. Halfway through her course she changed her mind and decided that she wanted to follow a career in the RAF Police. She did AS Levels first at Red School Sixth Form, though explained that she did not get the help she needed to be successful and highlights the disruption caused by changes in teachers.

> Natalie has lived at her current address for nine years. Her education was disrupted at the start of year three when she moved house. She missed some sessions and this may have had an impact on her learning. When she was around eight years of age she was 'lagging' in

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English and required additional support for these sessions. She explained that the school provided the support because they wanted to help her achieve a grade 'C'. She achieved a better result in English than she did in maths even though she believed maths was her stronger subject. Natalie received 20 minute sessions of support twice a week and believed it really helped.

Natalie does not like exams, she prefers coursework. This is because she believes she performs better with coursework assessment. Natalie explained this is one of the reasons that she chose to study a BTEC course. Natalie prefers to take time to develop her work and improve it. She believes this approach [coursework] to learning is much better

Context within thesis – Natalie's story highlights her disruptions to education due to her moving house (and subsequently school). Her move from city to suburban town highlights her different experiences of education, particularly in class sizes and resultant relationships with teachers. Natalie also discusses her assessment preference, which whilst linked to 'learning cultures', has a more specific link to Bloomer and Hodkinson's (1999) idea of 'learning careers' and 'assessment careers' that were discussed in Chapter Two.

Referring to an unsettled staffing situation at her sixth form school, Natalie states:

> "I did AS first at Grey sixth form, but with the teachers there I did not get the help I needed and for Sociology I had eleven teachers in one year and we had cover all year. I had to teach myself, it was like self-teaching."

Natalie also refers to her moving house and school as a disruption:

> "My education was slightly disrupted at the start of year three when I moved but it was different because I couldn't understand anyone and that. When I was around eight and nine I was lagging in English and I had extra support for these because the school wanted to help me get a C. I ended up doing better than in my Maths which I was better at. I only had 20 minute sessions of support but they were on just one area and they really helped. I had two of these sessions a week, just 40 minutes and it really helped."

Jenny reflects on her moving house/area as a disruption:

> "Well basically I used to live up North, and moved down about seven/eight years ago, so didn't like go to any first schools down here. My first school was in Mid-town and I joined year seven which I didn't like because I had moved from such a different area with different accents. Up North they have Primary and Secondary School, also

there's reception to year six in primary and seven to whatever in the next school, so it's really different. I did make friends straight away though it is difficult to adapt to live in a different place and everything."

Not all disruptions were perceived as negative in relation to progression or performance. Lucy refers to time away from school due to an injury:

"I had six months off whilst at school because I had a bad back. I thought it was going to mess up my exams but I came out with ten A-C grades even though I was predicted to get all Ds. I studied a lot at home and did alright in the exams."

In contrast to Lucy, Jack's disruption was borne out of a negative relationship with a teacher which had a resultant negative impact on his motivation to attend and continue the course:

"My education was disrupted through my school years. I didn't get on with this teacher and I think he used to give me low grades. I started to skip school and all my coursework started to pile up. My teacher then lost some of my coursework and I got even further behind. I kind of just give up and missed a lot of lesson and tha and that's why I didn't do too well at my GCSEs. I thought it would all change when I joined the sixth form, but it was exactly the same. This had a negative impact on my motivation to continue. It felt like school and I slipped into the same pattern."

Ben attributes poor exams grades to a 'stand-in' teacher:

"We changed teachers during the year and I did well in the exam that was taught by Mr Brown but the exam taught by the stand in teacher didn't go very well. I ended up having a bad grade overall though I think I would have done better if I had the same teacher all the way through."

Chris reflects on being excluded from school:

"I don't think I achieved my full potential at school because I was predicted all A grades and got mostly B and C grades. I had a bit of a nightmare in my final year, I got into some fights and ended up excluded, so yeah I was a bit of a div at school really, I messed up because I was quite clever and didn't do as well as I should have. The main reason I didn't get the grades I should have is due to being excluded right near the end and missing some revision sessions and that."

Building on the statements presented in relation to the participants' previous educational experiences, the following statement from Lucy refers to her current programme of study, she states:

> "When I came to college I missed the induction process and found it a bit difficult to get in with everyone. I felt like an outsider because everyone else had formed their groups and had developed friendships already."

In contrast to the disruptions experienced by Chris and Ben the advantages of a stable educational environment with high levels of structure and discipline is evident within specific educational settings. A feature that emerged from discussions with one learner highlighted the impact that studying within a religious setting had on her progress in education. She refers to the experience as 'disciplined' and an 'advantage'.

Introducing Lucy Taylor 'A student with a religious upbringing with ambitions of serving on the front line'

> Lucy did not go to infant school and started education at the Primary stage, a religious school with high levels of discipline and rules that had to be followed. Lucy believed this gave her a 'sturdy' upbringing explaining that 'some public schools don't help to bring you up the right way'. Lucy explains the 'right way' as the simple things like not talking when others are, being polite, and having good manners and morals. Lucy reflected on her time at the faith school and wished she had been more religious as she felt it would be advantageous to her development. Lucy believes a religious setting was beneficial to her education as it taught her discipline, and routine, for example attending church each week, and following specific religious practices.

> Lucy's overall ambition is to become an intelligence officer in the Army. She has wanted to join the Army since she was about eight. Her ideal position would be on the front line. From an early age Lucy joined the army cadets and really enjoyed the experience. She has a strong passion for the military and first went to the careers office when she was ten years of age after persuading her mother to take her. Her mother and father have always supported her in the decision to pursue the Army as a career and her grandmother and granddad are really behind her too. Lucy explained that they are as excited about her joining the military as she is. Lucy has a great respect for people who put their lives on the line for others and it is really important to her that there are people in society willing to do so.

Context within thesis – There is a strong link to Bourdieu's (1986) concept of cultural capital within Lucy's story and in particular the influence of religion on her development and '*habitus*' (Bourdieu, 1986; Webb *et al*, 2008). There is also a theme surrounding the accumulation of cultural capital through experience. This theme was unique to Lucy and therefore not supported by the other participants in this study. Whilst there is no supporting data for this theme the issue of religion was important to Lucy and therefore presented in this chapter. Again, I draw on Flyvberg's (2006) recommendations to justify this one unique story (see Chapter Three, p.81-82). Due to the uniqueness and sensitivity of these themes (religion and a traumatic event) there were no supporting data from the lesson observations or focus groups. The issue of religion and a traumatic critical incident may have led to sensitive and highly personal discussion that would not be appropriate in a focus group setting, therefore they were not explored outside of the semi-structured interviews.

Lucy refers to her experience of a religious school setting:

> "I didn't go to infant school and started education at Purple Primary School, a religious school with lots of discipline and rules that had to be followed. I think this helped give me a sturdy upbringing as some public schools don't help to bring you up the right way, if that makes sense? What I mean by the right way is the simple things like not talking when others are and being polite, earning good manners and morals. I'm not that religious, although my parents are, they didn't make me go through the religious factors like communion."

Lucy continues:

> "I think religion would give you an advantage in education as it teaches you discipline, like you have to get up and go to church every week, and you have certain things to follow, it pushes you more."

Sub-theme 4.2.7: Assessment Preference

It is evident from the data collected that learners have an assessment preference, that is, a preference of coursework assignments (the primary assessment method used on the BTEC programme) as opposed to the summative exam used on A-level programmes. The researcher narrative below and following

participant statements indicate that learners were motivated to study the BTEC

programme due to the perceived assessment methods associated with it.

Jenny Clarke 'A girl who chose the BTEC pathway because she doesn't like exams'

> Jenny progressed through school and decided not to go to sixth form as she didn't want to follow an A-levels study pathway. Jenny knew that she wanted to be in the Police or Prison Service so thought a Public Service Course was more relevant. He primary reasons Jenny picked the BTEC pathway over A-levels is because she does not like the examination assessment method. Jenny explained that she can work well in lessons though struggles in exams and can 'blank out' and not achieve as highly as predicted. Jenny also wanted to study at a completely different place to the sixth form of her school. Reflecting on her decision to study the Public Services course Jenny explains that she works well when completing coursework as she will keep improving her work, she considers herself a perfectionist and strives to achieve the best possible grade. Jenny also wanted to study a subject that she found interesting.

Context within thesis – Jenny's story focusses on her assessment preference and

how this guided her education pathway. There is a clear link to Torrance and

Coultas' (2004) report, where the assessment methods used for a particular type

of study programme may facilitate learner drop-out and deter their progression

depending on the learner's history of success with these assessment methods.

Referring back to the motivation section of my literature review (chapter two)

Lucy appears to fit the 'N'af' personality type (McClelland *et al*, 1976) where a

heightened fear of a particular assessment method has resulted from previous

failure in this method (exams in this instance).

Jenny explains how she performs better in coursework than exams, she states:

> "One of the main reasons I picked BTECs over A levels is because I don't like exams. I work well in lessons though when it comes to exams I blank out and I don't do as well as I should. I did consider A-levels though the BTEC suited me. I also wanted to come to a different place completely than the sixth form. I work well doing coursework as I will keep going, I'm a perfectionist and have to get the best grade I can."

Natalie has a similar view of assessment to Jenny, she states:

> "I don't like exams, I prefer coursework. I always do better in coursework. That is one of the reasons that I chose BTEC. I did my mocks and they weren't that bad, but because we hadn't covered everything I had to like guess the answers. With coursework you like get a date it has to be in and you can work to get it ready. I think this is better."

To further explain the learners' preference of coursework over exams, it appears that there is a link to a goal outcome orientation to learning, that is, they are motivated by the final goal or outcome. As the following statements suggest, the 'goal' may be the certificate (BTEC Diploma), the accolade or prestige associated with the achievement of the 'goal'.

Lucy refers to the BTEC Extended Diploma course stating:

> "I'm really happy with the way things have gone so far. I'm really happy I'm on this course and that I chose to do this course because I feel like I'm working towards my goal."

Laura refers to past study:

> "I liked the project work we did in Green School, I liked knowing what I was doing and working towards it every week and seeing where you are heading basically."

Jack highlights his lack of motivation from not having a 'goal', he states:

> "Due to all the course work and stress and not being ready, and not having a goal so not needing to try."

Data gained from observation of the assessment practice during lessons reinforced the above statements with learners' exhibiting a preference in particular assessment methods. During one lesson I observed learners engaging with multiple assessment methods. It was clearly evident by the body language and comments from the learners that they preferred the 'poster presentation' assessment method over the 'quick fire [written] test'. Follow up discussion during a focus group meeting confirmed my initial thoughts. Natalie stated:

> "I much prefer doing posters and presenting them because you can take time, discuss it with your friends and there's not so much pressure… I don't like the quick exams we sometimes do… I need time to think."

Supporting Sub-theme 4.2.11: The learner's perception of the BTEC Extended Diploma in comparison to A-Levels.

The learner's perception of the value, difficulty, and perceived level of discipline associated with the BTEC Extended Diploma in comparison to traditional A-level study appeared to have an impact on their progression pathway and resultant motivation to learn.

Jack Green 'A student who didn't get the grades required to study A-Levels'

> Jack did not know what he wanted to do as a career as he was progressing through school and therefore did not know what subjects to choose. Initially he chose media and IT as well as Science and maths. He did not achieve as well as he wanted in his GCSEs so he stayed on at sixth form and studied philosophy and IT. Jack explained that he didn't have good enough grades to take many subjects but he was able to study a Public Services First Diploma [level two course]. This stimulated his interest in the Police and led to him applying for the National Diploma [level three course]. Jack hopes to gain a distinction on the BTEC National Diploma, and either stay in education to complete the Foundation Degree in Uniformed Services at mid-town college or seek work experience to build his CV for police entry. He is considering joining the special constabulary.
>
> Reflecting on the things that motivated him to work towards the distinction grades, Jack states the key motivators are enjoyment of sessions and EMA (educational maintenance allowance). Jack explained that the EMA was a highly important incentive as it provided him with a small income.
>
> Jack explained that he did not achieve the GCSE grades required to study A-levels and if he had achieved better grades he would have followed the A-level study pathway. Jack believes that A-levels provide learners with more options and offer more flexibility than other level three qualifications, particularly if you have not decided on a specific career path. Jack thinks that 'A-level' is more prestigious than the 'BTEC' or other types of level three qualification.

Context within thesis – Jack's story highlights his preference of the college environment over the previous educational environments he has studied within, namely schools. Jack refers to the Educational Maintenance Allowance (DfE, 2010) award that he received on a weekly basis and how this helped motivate

him to learn. EMA is a sum of money awarded to learners who qualify due to their annual household income falling below a set threshold on a weekly basis. The award of the EMA was dependent on the learner's attendance to college. EMA is no longer available in England. This economic to cultural capital transaction links to the Bourdieu section of my literature review, and in particular the idea of capital transaction (Ahmed, 2004).

Jack speaks of his desire to study A-levels and the lack of opportunity for him to pursue this educational pathway due to his GCSE grade profile:

> "I wouldn't have had the grades to go and study A-levels as my best grade was a 'D'. If I had got better grades I probably would have applied for A-levels. Everyone wants to do A-levels and it's good if you don't know what to do because you can study different subjects. It would give me more options. In my opinion A-levels and BTEC are the same though I think employers prefer A-levels, I think A-levels sound better."

Introducing Ben White 'A student born on a military camp in Germany and wishes to join the security industry'

> Ben was born in Germany on a RAF camp due to his father serving overseas. Three years after he was born he moved to Bath. He lived there for two years and in 1999, he moved to a local village, where he currently lives.

> Ben was initially interested in pursuing a career in the Police Service, now he is interested in the Security Guarding and sees his future in this industry. Ben was planning to study A-levels though he did not really want to follow the A-level pathway. Ben explained he was pushed into it. Ben believes A-levels would be too difficult for him. He does not want to go to university and therefore believes the BTEC course is the best option. Ben did not achieve the qualifications required to study A-levels though explained that this was not the reason he decided not to pursue the A-level pathway. He decided before his exams that he wanted to be a Police Officer and if he got better results at GCSE he still would not have chosen to study A-levels because he did not think he would enjoy them. Ben believes that A-levels are more valuable than BTECs though chose to study the BTEC because he thought he would enjoy the course more. Ben does not think the teachers at his school valued BTECs, and this is because they followed the A-level pathway. Ben explained that he would have wanted to study the BTEC option from the start if his teachers at school better promoted this educational pathway as an option.

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Context within thesis – Ben's story focuses on his perception of the BTEC qualification in comparison to A-levels. He positions the A-level above the BTEC in terms of its value though emphasizes his preference of the BTEC due to his perception that the BTEC will be more enjoyable. Bourdieu's (1986) concepts of capital and *habitus* can help us to understand Ben's choices.

Ben states that A-level study would be 'too hard' for him:

> "I was going to do A-levels and I didn't want to do them. I was pushed into it. I thought A-levels would be too hard. I don't want to go to university so I think this course [BTEC Public Services] is right for me."

Ben then continues, referring to guidance he received when considering his education progression pathway:

> "I didn't get the qualifications to do A-levels though that wasn't the reason I decided not to go for A-levels. I decided before my exams that I wanted to be a Police Officer. If I got better results at GCSE I still wouldn't have chosen to do A-levels because I wouldn't enjoy them. I want to enjoy my course, and I think I wouldn't enjoy A-levels. I think the A-levels are worth more though picked the BTEC because I thought I would enjoy it. I only considered A-levels for a bit because I was in the top sets in school and everyone in the top sets do A-levels. A-levels were discussed a lot by our teachers and BTEC wasn't really mentioned, though I know they are worth three A-levels. I don't think the teachers value BTECs, I think it is because they did A-levels and they didn't think BTECs were any good. If the teachers told me that BTECs were the best I would have wanted to do the BTEC from the start. They are not really promoted in school."

Chris reflects on his decision to transfer from A-level study to the BTEC programme:

> "I started doing A-levels at the university campus (maths, government and politics, drama and history) though because I was interested in the RAF I thought I would be best suited to the Public Services course. I nearly didn't get on the course because the tutor said it was too late and I had too much to catch up. My mum persuaded him and I have caught up ad getting good grades. I prefer the BTEC as it is less strict. With A-levels you are just sitting there and on the BTEC course you get to do a lot more outdoor activities and interactive stuff. I like the hands-on approach to learning and the course is definitely the right choice for my chosen career."

Chapter summary: responding to the primary research questions

In summarizing this chapter I will review and respond to the primary research questions set out in Chapter One and again in the preceding paragraphs of this section. As the answers to such questions require in depth discussion, the responses here will be brief and simply act as a precursor to Chapter Five (discussion) and Chapter Six (conclusions and recommendations) where a detailed response to each question will be presented.

Research question one: Why do learners within post-compulsory education studying vocational courses at Mid-town College have a perceived lack of motivation to achieve the level of progress expected as indicated through low value added scores?

Response: The findings from the data that has been analysed suggests a wide ranging number of factors that can be attributed to a learner's motivation to learn and progress in education. These include 'emotional factors' such as the influence of peers, parents and teachers, the approach used by and personality of the teacher, and critical incidents that have taken place at various points in a learner's education. In addition, there are 'cultural factors' such as religion, perception of the value of qualifications, assessment preferences, and cultures associated with FE such as independent learning. Whilst the data analysed highlighted sub-themes pertinent to the broader emotional and cultural factors that may impact learner motivation, these findings also present the diverse and individualistic nature of learning and learner motivation. Linking back to the [historically low] value added data for the vocational area at the centre of this study, the emerging sub-theme (4.2.9) of 'goal oriented' learning appears contradictory, unless the goal of the learner is particularly low or if the value/capital associated with achieving the higher grades is [to the learner] not worth the investment in time and energy. This idea of a 'capital investment' by the learner leads on to the second research question.

Research question two: Can Bourdieu's concepts, specifically 'capital', 'field' and '*habitus*' be used as theoretical and conceptual tools to understand the learners' life courses and help explain their motivation and orientation to learning?

Response: In short, yes. The findings emerging from the data fit Bourdieu's conceptual framework, and in particular his concept of cultural capital. Bourdieu's work around cultural capital will be extended (see Chapter Two) to include emotional capital. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five (discussion). The key Bourdieusian concepts that will be discussed are 'capital' and 'field', and how learners may prioritise one form of capital over another.

In depth discussion and application of Bourdieu's conceptual tools to the themes and sub-themes presented in this chapter will provide the platform for a detailed response to *Research Question 3* 'What can be learned (teachers, managers, policy makers) about learning motivation through completing this study?'

Chapter Five (analysis and synthesis of findings) focuses on the two overarching themes of emotional capital and learning cultures. Each of these two themes will be discussed within the context of the prominent sub-themes. This approach is detailed within the introduction to Chapter Five.

Chapter Five

Analysis, Interpretation and Synthesis of Findings

Introduction

This discussion chapter will be focused around the two overarching themes of emotional capital and learning cultures. Each of these will be discussed within the context of the most prominent sub-themes that emerged and were presented in Chapter Four (table 5.1). In addition, it became evident through initial analysis that many of the sub-themes have significant influence on, and connection to each other. I have represented these links with examples within table 5.1 as 'supporting sub-themes'. Whilst table 5.1 does not provide an exhaustive network of links between themes, it does highlight the interconnectedness of the findings presented in Chapter Four.

Table 5.1. Prominent themes from the findings.

4.1 Emotional Capital		4.2 Learning Cultures	
Prominent Sub-themes			
4.1.1. Social aspects	4.1.6. Critical incidents	4.2.2: Disruptions in education	4.2.7: Assessment preference
Supporting Sub-themes			
4.1.4. Influence of significant others	4.1.2. Teacher more important to learner than subject when deciding subject options	4.1.6. Critical incidents	4.2.11: The learner's perception of the BTEC Extended Diploma in comparison to A-Levels

Table 5.1 shows the interconnectedness of themes, sub-themes and supporting sub-themes. The supporting sub-themes may not have their own specific space within this chapter though will be considered (along with others) when discussing the four prominent themes.

The four prominent themes will be organised and discussed within this chapter as analytic categories. These categories are pertinent to all three primary research questions set out in Chapter One and presented again in Chapter Four.

The primary research questions were largely satisfied through the development and presentation of themes and sub-themes within the findings chapter. This chapter takes a step towards a holistic perspective through reconstruction and synthesis of the data using Bourdieu's conceptual thinking tools. The analytic categories are:

1. Social Aspects – including group integration and the need for friendship and belonging.
2. Critical Incidents – such as traumatic life experiences, key decision making moments (GCSE options, etc.) and the role of significant others'.
3. Disruptions in Education – such as moving house, change of teacher, and the relationship between the teacher and learner.
4. Assessment Preference – such as a learner's preference of coursework over exams

Each of the analytic categories will be discussed within the context of one of the two overarching themes of emotional capital or learning cultures. When discussing each analytic category the following analytical framework (adapted from Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008) will be considered:

- Connective threads among the experiences of the participants.
- The ways in which the participants understand and explain these connections.
- Assumed and anticipated relationships and connections.
- Unexpected relationships and connections.
- Consistency or inconsistency with the literature.
- Ways in which the data may go beyond the literature

Following this in-depth discussion of each analytic category, the chapter will conclude through revisiting the assumptions set out in Chapter One and presenting a final summary of interpretations of findings and how these may have been influenced through researcher bias.

Analysis and synthesis of findings: 4.1 Emotional Capital.

Analytic Category 1: Social Aspects

Key Findings – The social aspect of college, that is, the learner's integration into social groups and friendship circles whilst studying in further education (FE) is regarded by the overwhelming majority of participants in this study as 'highly important' to their progress and success. Some participants felt so strongly about this that they regarded group integration as a higher priority than learning whilst at college. There is a link here to the work of Martinez and Munday (1998) where they cite 'students' sociability' as a major influence on a learner's motivation to continue with a programme of study. They state:

> "Students' sociability is the second major message. The most positive aspect of college for most students is other students. The implication is that efforts to promote group formation, facilitate purposeful socialisation and support collaborative approaches to learning will pay great dividends." (p.113)

The participants' perception of the importance of positive social interaction to learning reinforces James and Biesta (2007) and their suggestion that 'learning cultures are the social practices through which people learn' and therefore reinforces the idea of 'learning as a social practice' (p.3).

- Integration into social groups is seen as a higher priority than learning [whilst at college] for some learners.
- The social aspect associated with college is seen as highly important to learners.
- Family and close friends can have a significant impact on a learner's career and education choices.
- Students show loyalty [when deciding their subject options] to teachers with whom they have a positive relationship.
- Parental support is a key factor to a learner when deciding career and education pathways.
- Some learners prioritise the need for friendship and belonging before learning (reinforcing Maslow's 'needs' hierarchy, 1943, 1954 – see Chapter Two).

The first common thread linking participants' experiences of studying within FE is their perception of the importance of the social network within the FE institution they study. All participants within my study bring focus to the social aspect of college as an important factor to learning motivation. One of the participants, Ben White explained "I believe friendship and the social side of education is the most important." This prioritization of importance (to the social side of college) is a theme echoed with all participants and reinforced by a statement presented in Chapter Four from Chris Manley when discussing his main motivations for attending college. Chris links his motivation to learn to his enjoyment of his course of study and this enjoyment, in turn, is linked to friendship and the social aspect of the college experience. This reinforces the findings of the TLRP project's (2008) commentary report that suggests that learners 'often claimed that the main benefits of college were making new friends' (p.14). Whilst it was anticipated (from my personal experiences within education) to hear that students' learning motivation is linked to the social side of their educational experience, the data from my study emphasizes the potential importance of this aspect of college to the learners within this study. James and Biesta (2007) gives credence to this perspective when they explain that learning, and learning cultures are 'complex social practices', thus presenting the educational experience of a learner as a complex social arena , but also (through using the term 'practice'), a field that is in a continuous state of flux. This state of continuous flux may be the result of the high number of variables that influence the social arena within an educational field. The TLRP (2008) commentary report 'challenge and change in further education' supports the idea of learning within FE being a complex social practice, stating:

> "The research revealed a far more complex picture than had previously been recognised of students' 'learning journeys' and the interplay between college and their wider lives. The students' own accounts, and researchers' observations, show that being at college and following courses of study should be seen as part of these wider lives." (p.14)

Further analysis of the participants' responses highlight that friendship, social acceptance and the influence of significant others may be important factors to learners when they prioritise their educational experiences, objectives and/or

outcomes. In Chapter Four I presented Lucy Taylor's experience of an outdoor pursuit session. Her story has a theme of 'social acceptance' entwined within a broader context of group cohesion. The link to Martinez and Munday's (1998) work on 'student drop-out in FE' is evident here. Within their report they cite 'feelings of isolation or not belonging' and 'early problems settling in' as key factors in influencing a learners motivation to continue on their programme of study (p.109). In addition, the statement from Jack Green (see Chapter Four) where he states the most influential people on his life emphasizes the importance of friendship within the college social arena and highlights that friendship is likely to be influential to the learning experience. Conversely, it would be misplaced to assume that group cohesion, friendship and social acceptance are always conducive to a positive learning environment and whilst seen by the learner as an important aspect of their learning experience, the impact (either positive or negative) of group cohesion and friendship on a learner's success and value added score can vary significantly (Alvarado and López Turley, 2012; Arcidiacono and Nicholson, 2004; Hanushek *et al.*, 2003; Schneeweis and Winter-Ebmer, 2007; Zimmerman, 2003). These studies have highlighted a high number of variables that can influence the outcome of whether a peer group positively or negatively impacts learning (for an individual), ranging from ethnic and socio-economic status to the size and age of the peer group. In response to assertions such as this, parents have attempted to direct and influence their children's social circles through the careful selection of school catchment areas when house buying, and recreational and sporting activities (Haynie *et al*, 2006; Mouw and Entwisle 2006). Alvarado and López Turley (2012) suggests that parental guidance with regards to peer group selection can have little impact as adolescents will tend to 'self-select' their peers and 'self-segregate' due to their racial, class and gender dispositions. In addition, they suggest that during adolescent years, youth become 'increasingly independent' from their parents. This perspective is questioned by my research where parental influence on adolescents appears to be a significant factor in a learner's decision making as reinforced by Jenny Clarke's story in Chapter Four where she reflects on her relationship with her mother. There is a link here to Reay's (2000) idea of emotional capital, and in particular a mother's 'emotional

engagement' in her child's education. As discussed in Chapter Two, Reay's research is centred on Primary School aged children, though it appears that in some instances this 'emotional engagement' can continue into adolescence. Chris Manley's story, presented in Chapter Four, highlights the importance to him of parental acceptance regarding his chosen career. Both of these participants' views suggest that parental influence remains a significant factor to adolescent decision making though it may be easier to influence future career opportunities more than complex social aspects such as peer group selection, and particularly where peer groups are formed within a subject area within a college. This links to Matinez and Munday's (1998) findings where they cite 'inappropriate parental guidance or influence' as a key factor influencing a learners motivation to continue on a programme of study (p.108) thus emphasizing the influence of parents in a learner's decision making process. Considering these points, it may be suggested that the opportunity for teachers/lecturers to influence positive change (to learning motivation) through group manipulation is limited as the learners that make up the group tend to have similar learning and life dispositions (James and Biesta, 2007). This idea of limited opportunity for teacher/tutor intervention links back to my literature review and Hodkinson and Bloomer's (2000) study where they found that students' dispositions towards learning were intricately related to their wider social lives. The participant profiles and data highlighted that they tend to come from the same broad geographical area and they have similar interests in that they are pursuing careers in the public uniformed services. With a plethora of common interests and dispositions between learners within a programme of study it may be suggested that the opportunities for effective interventions (to improve learner/learning motivation) through cohort/group manipulation are limited. This idea is reinforced by James and Wahlberg (2007) who suggests there is a limit to tutor intervention and that 'improvement' and 'intervention' were 'problematic' terms if the assumption is that tutors are always in a position to bring about the improvements.

Reflecting on the learning cultures section of my literature review, it may be suggested that peer groups, regardless of the group makeup, can be influenced

into adopting a positive learning culture (James and Biesta, 2007). This is reinforced by Martinez (2001) where he cites 'group ethos and identity' as key factors for colleges to improve the learners' experience, stating:

> "Colleges can improve [the learners' experience] by paying particular attention to the early stages of programmes of learning (student induction, initial assessment and the establishment of group ethos and identity)." (p.6)

From this perspective, developing tools/strategies to facilitate the adoption of a positive learning culture may be a more useful starting point than peer group manipulation when supporting a learner's motivation towards achieving their full potential. This is consistent with Howard's (2001), view that 'there needs to be a systematic change in the national culture towards learning' (p.1). She highlights a need for an understanding of how the education market works and what makes people believe learning will improve their lives. This presents the idea that learning is an investment, something that one may acquire through labour (the learning process) and can be used as a resource to heighten future opportunity.

Using Howard's (2001) view of a need to heighten the understanding of the 'education market', and applying Bourdieu's (1986) conceptual thinking tool 'capital', the value of education may be better understood by learners. In consideration of Bourdieu's (1986) notion of 'cultural capital' it may be suggested that education, or indeed learning, is a transactional process (Ahmed, 2004), that is, an exchange of capital resource within its associated fields.

The key to increasing learning motivation from a cultural perspective, that is, to bring about interventions that may positively influence the development of a culture of studiousness within a learning cohort, may lie in making learners fully aware of the different values associated with learning. Through better understanding of both merit based (the certificate/diploma) and 'incorporated' (Anheier *et al*, 1995) cultural capital (that gained through ownership of certain dispositions, styles and tastes that have been acquired through one's educational experience), learners may become motivated by the educational process over the outcome (Hattie, 2009). This would bring importance, from the learner's

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perspective, back to the classroom environment, as learners may believe that they are acquiring something other than knowledge and that the experiences they have whilst at college may positively affect them in other ways. Learners may then understand that education can change individuals, and that these changes have value.

If learners are to acquire something other than knowledge that is deemed to have value that can be used as a resource within transactional processes, that is, traded on and used as 'capital', then what are these valuable acquisitions, these educationally gained capital resources? Considering these questions from a Bourdieusian perspective I will use the term 'dispositional cultural assets', meaning any form of cultural capital that may change the disposition(s) of a student in a way that may add value [to them] within today's work marketplace.

During a recent meeting with employers at a Local Enterprise Partnership event (LEP, 2013) in the South West, a group of employers were asked to identify the qualities of 'the perfect employee'. The exercise was to identify what qualities educators should aim to develop with learners in order to make them more employable. Seven key qualities were identified. It is important to note that there is no particular order or ranking to the following qualities:

1. Ambitious
2. Confident
3. Flexible
4. Hardworking
5. Honest
6. Independent
7. Resilient

As the above qualities were identified by labour market stakeholders and deemed valuable in terms of increased employability, it may be suggested that these seven qualities are the dispositional cultural assets that can be developed within individuals throughout their educational careers, or what Bloomer and Hodkinson (1999) call 'learning careers'.

In reviewing the participant data a number of these qualities or dispositional cultural assets are evident. The two I have drawn out here (confidence and independence) were the most prominent within the data, reinforcing that they

may be developed within an educational setting and thus should be considered when devising programmes of study.

The term 'confidence' appears numerous times within the data transcripts. In this example Sam Long reflects on a teacher from an earlier school setting who helped build his confidence, he states;

> "the teach[er] like told us we were ahead [in our study] and that we were capable of it [sitting their GCSEs early], and it kinda [*sic*] boosted my confidence with it and we went through it [sat the GCSE exams early] and got pretty good results."

The 'boost' in confidence mentioned in the example is linked to 'pretty good results' and whilst a crude example of the transactional value of developing ones dispositional cultural assets, the benefits to the learner are clear. Sam Long was confident in sitting a GCSE early and this provided him with the opportunity to study an additional GCSE which added to his portfolio of educational attainment.

The second dispositional cultural asset drawn out from the participant data is *Independence*. Lucy Taylor compares school and college, stating;

> "I think the main difference between school and college is being independent. I have to get up and catch the bus and get to college myself, and in school, everything is done for you, but at college you are told what needs to be done and then have to go and research it yourself and go to the library in your own time and write your assignments. I prefer the college approach. You get a lot more mature, you have to make sure that you put the effort in because it is down to you."

This example suggests that college practices such as research along with college environments such as the library may support the development of independence, though it is the teacher who acts as the catalyst to independent study. Whilst James and Wahlberg (2007) may be accurate in stating there are 'limits to tutor intervention', the tutor/teacher still plays a pivotal role in supporting the development of 'wider skills' that will facilitate the learner in taking ownership of their own learning and development and pushing through the potential upper limit boundary of tutor intervention. Teaching students to be 'studious' and develop an understanding of the value of and acquisition of dispositional cultural assets may provide the platform for learners' realising their full potential whilst

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studying within further education. Whilst a compelling argument may be constructed in support of tutors/teachers developing learners' understanding of dispositional cultural assets, further consideration needs to be given with regards to how learners' understanding of their dispositional cultural assets may lead to a culture of excellence within an educational setting.

Further to developing the learners' understanding of cultural capital and its associated value, the participant data suggest that emotional capital plays a significant role in motivating learners/learning. Friendship, fear, happiness, amusement, pride, belonging, love and respect are evident throughout the participant data transcripts. I will not be focusing on all of these emotions as separate entities within this thesis. However, the most prominent emotions within the transcripts (happiness, friendship and belonging) will be evident within the sub-themes that are in focus. In many instances these emotions are linked to significant others, primarily friends, peers, partners, and family (e.g. parents and grandparents). Both Jenny Clarke's and Chris Manley's stories (Chapter Four) provide evidence of the importance of significant others and the emotional links between them. In the cases of these two participants in particular, it is the strong link between mother and child that is evident within the child's decision-making process and resultant motivation towards both education and the subsequent career paths. Reay's (2000) exploration of the concept of emotional capital in order to better understand a mother's involvement in their children's education reinforces these points. Whilst Reay's (2000) study is centred on primary school aged learners and the difference in perceived value of a child's success in education from working and middle class perspectives, the emotional capital spent by mothers' on their children to improve their child's chances of success within the educational market place is clear within her research. Reay uses terms such as 'endemic anxiety' (p.582) and 'unremitting emotional distress' (p.583) when describing a mother's emotional involvement in her child's education. The participant data collected during this study may not suggest such a high degree of emotional involvement (this may be due to the perspective being of the learners as opposed to the parents) at the

further education (adolescent) age range, yet it does support Reay's notion of a relationship between emotional capital and educational success.

It appears that emotional capital, when discussed within the parent, teacher, learner social triad, can be understood from two primary perspectives, 1) the parents and their emotional 'investment' in their child's education, and 2) the learner's emotional response to their parent's emotional investment in their education. Figure 5.1 illustrates this dual perspective relationship and how each of the agents (e.g. mother and child) can heighten the emotional capital of one another.

Emotional Investment
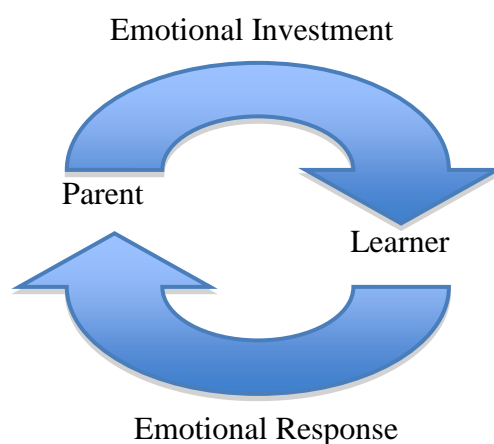
Parent

Learner

Emotional Response

Figure 5.1. Investment/Response Model: A parents and learners reciprocated emotional transaction.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the reciprocal relationship and subsequent transaction of emotional capital between a learner and their parent(s)[1]. This diagram only represents the relationship between two of the variables of the educational social triad. The third variable is the teacher[2]. Do similar reciprocated emotional transactions occur between teachers and students? Jenny Clarke's story (see Chapter Four) where she explains her decision to study languages supports this notion. Jenny's story suggests that learners can have a strong emotional investment in their teachers and that this capital investment may impact on a learner's decision-making process with regards to key educational choices. Taking this idea a step further, it may be suggested that the relationship between

a learner and their teacher may be a key factor in understanding learner/learning motivation from the perspective of capital transaction.

An opportunity to further explore this teacher/learner relationship was taken during a recent (September 2013) enrolment and induction (at the college site) of a new cohort of learners for the 2013/14 academic year. Teachers were asked 'how is the induction process going?, the responses were extremely positive. One teacher described the induction period as 'the best time of the [academic] year, referring to the learners as 'highly motivated' and 'enthusiastic'. One Curriculum Manager stated 'if we [the teacher team] could maintain this level of enthusiasm the [academic] year would be a breeze.' In addition to the positive comments regarding learning motivation, one teacher reflected on the teaching team; 'everyone's really up for it this year, the team are buzzing, it's going to be a good year.' And another teacher stated 'everyone's feeling refreshed [post-summer leave] and ready to go, I'm looking forward to starting the main programme [of study]'.

Through personal experience, I believe this strong theme of teacher positivity and perception of learner motivation is not atypical during the start of an academic year. Generally, learners' tend to arrive at the college excited, enthusiastic and motivated. This is supported by the 'student voice' data that is captured through the college sites' quality assurance mechanisms. The college site surveys all full-time learners at three points throughout the year, 1) post-induction, 2) mid-year, and 3) end of year. In terms of the key questions relating to overall student satisfaction the post induction survey highlights a significantly higher percentage of learners grading their overall experience as 'good' or 'outstanding' than that recorded during the mid and end of year surveys. This is supported by a three-year trend between 2010/11 and 2012/13.

If these assertions are accurate (learners are arriving at college motivated, enthusiastic and excited about their programmes of study) it is important for teachers and education managers to understand why this high level of motivation may diminish over the academic year and/or what factors play a role in this process. The results of the survey of learners and teachers during the

induction period when applied to the investment/response model (fig 5.1) provides an idea for further consideration. It appears that both teachers and learners are highly motivated during the start of the academic year. I suggest that motivation is an emotionally reflective social response. That is, motivation is reflected in and between agents (in this case the teacher and learner). It appears that if a teacher is motivated, excited and enthusiastic, then these emotional behaviours will be reflected within the learner, i.e. the learner will become more motivated, excited and enthusiastic. Of course there are other variables at play here during the induction period such as the change of environment from school to college, meeting new people such as class peers and teachers, and the transition from a mandatory (albeit with some choice regarding GCSE subjects) to 'chosen' educational pathway. However, the link between teacher motivation and learner motivation is evident. Expanding on the idea of 'motivation' being socially reflective, it may be suggested that the decline in learner motivation throughout the academic year may be due to a decline in teacher motivation. This brings about a different perspective of maintenance of learning motivation where the focus is on the teacher. The answer to issues surrounding declining learner motivation may be found through understanding the causes of decline in teacher motivation. This links back to the literature review and the work of Hodkinson *et al* (2007) where they highlight that the 'positions, dispositions and actions of the tutors... contribute significantly to a learning culture' and resultant learner/learning motivation (p.415-416). In terms of 'capital' the investment/response model suggests that the emotional investment, that is, the amount of emotional capital a teacher invests in a learner may have an impact on the learner achieving their full potential at college. Thomson (2013) supports this idea; he suggests that whilst some will see education as a 'consumption good' or a 'positional good', many will see education as an 'investment good: something which, of itself, creates value.' (p.4).

When considering the notion of motivation being an emotionally reflective social response and applying the investment/response model (fig 5.1) there appears to be no upper limit to the heightened positive motivation that may be gained through teacher intervention. I suggest caution here as the continuous positive

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development of learning motivation (when considering the investment/response model) relies on the learners' response being continually positive.

Analytic Category 2: Critical Incidents

Key Findings – A strong theme that emerged during data analysis is that critical incidents such as a student's first day at college, their induction week, or more traumatic life events such as losing a significant other, can have a significant impact on their motivation to learn. The following outlines the key threads drawn out from the participant interview transcripts:

- Traumatic life experiences and events can have a significant impact on a learner's career and/or educational pathway.
- Critical incidents can impact learning motivation.
- A learner's perception of a teacher's personality and/or approach to teaching can impact on their [the learners] progress and early career pathway choices.
- Motivation and/or the emotional capital associated with critical incidents may diminish over time.

It is important to clarify here the difference between a 'critical incident' and a 'traumatic life experience'. A critical incident is an event experienced by the participant that has the potential to change their view, direction or situation. A traumatic life experience is an event experienced by the participant that causes physical/emotional trauma. A traumatic life event is likely to be a critical incident, however, a critical incident could impact the participant positively or negatively and may not cause any trauma. One example of a critical incident that emerged from the participant data during analysis was a recent traumatic life experience encountered by Laura Small whose boyfriend died in a car accident. The statements from Laura Small (see Chapter Four) present a strong emotional response to a traumatic life event that brought about a significant change in her life direction, that is, from a career as a beautician to the pursuit of a career as a fire fighter. The emotional subject, in this instance, is extreme and uncommon within learning cohorts at adolescent age. The emotional response from the learner included significant changes in her life ambitions and resultant motivation towards learning. Whilst the example of critical incident used

here is extreme, it does highlight clearly the impact critical incidents can have on an individual's learning motivation, particularly, if they are traumatic life experiences. Previously within this chapter I have suggested the use of caution when considering emotional responses and the transactional relationship between the emotional investment and the resultant emotional response. The need for caution was based on the idea that positive emotional investment does not always result in a positive subject interpretation, that is, a positive learner response. Another dynamic that needs to be considered is 'time'. Through analysis of the participant transcripts, it may be suggested, that the emotional response from a learner to an emotional stimulus may change over time.

As recorded in Chapter Four Laura Small decided to leave the public services course after finishing the first year of study and reverted to pursuing a career in beauty therapy. Laura explained that she was 'emotionally motivated' to join the programme following the death of her boyfriend and now that she has come to terms with her loss she feels she needs to follow her 'true passion'. Whilst this pattern of emotional stimulus and response may have been linked to Laura Small and the grieving process she experienced (Kubler-Ross, 1969), the notion of 'ever diminishing emotional value' helps provide a model for use when exploring emotional transactions such as investment/response interventions within more common educational critical incidents such as a change in teacher, a change in programme of study, or the first day of college.

In order to explain the diminishing value of emotional capital, I will use a conceptual tool I call the hourglass model. The image of an hourglass with the grains of sand continuously falling provides a vivid illustration of the reduction of emotional capital over time. The sand in this instance represents the learner's emotional response to a critical incident or period. The hourglass model is most useful when applied to a specific situation. The following three-stage process is an example of the use of the hourglass model for discussion when planning educational interventions.

1. *Critical incident or period*
2. *Passage of time*
3. *Educational intervention*

Example: A learner's first day at college – the first day of college is a critical period that all learners will experience and therefore is a key critical incident in terms of planning educational interventions. The statements from teachers (analytic category 1) suggest that learners generally arrive at college excited and enthusiastic about their course and are motivated to learn.

Stage 1 – critical period: a learner's first day at college. During this time a learner, generally, (there are times when this may not be the case, e.g. an anxious learner transferring from another learning site) has a high level of learning motivation. This is represented in figure 5.2(1) where the hourglass has just been turned and all of the sand (representing the learner's motivation to learn) is held in the upper section of the glass.

Stage 2 – passage of time: the learner is continuing on their programme of study. During this time (any time between stage 1 and stage 3) the learner's motivation to learn is diminishing. This is represented in figure 5.2(2) as the sand is continuously falling from the upper section of the glass.

Stage 3 – educational intervention: change in programme content and/or delivery. The third stage can be implemented at any time and will be the result of a teacher/manager intervention that will either A) increase the rate of learning motivation diminishment, or B) decrease (or reverse) learner motivation diminishment. An increased rate of diminishment is represented in figure 5.2(3a) as a widening of the mid-section of the hourglass. The greater the impact of the intervention, the wider the mid-section of the hourglass, thus allowing the sand to fall more quickly (or indeed all at once). A decrease or reverse of the rate of diminishment is represented in figure 5.2(3b) as the hourglass being turned thus maintaining or increasing the amount of sand in the upper section of the glass.
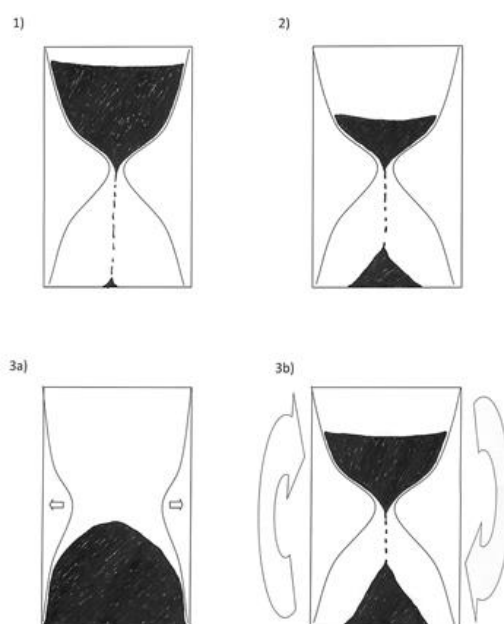
Figure 5.2. Hourglass Model.

The hourglass model provides a conceptual tool for use in visualizing a learner's motivation as emotional capital, and, how the amount of capital can change with time.

When using the hourglass model as a conceptual tool it is important to visualize the continuous diminishment of emotional capital, motivation, etc. as the sand falls from the upper compartment of the glass. This highlights the importance of time in decision making.

The hourglass tool has many applications when planning an academic year, particularly when used to help teachers and managers understand the need for urgent and constant use of teacher intervention to maintain emotional capital. Examples include:

- *Planning student enrichment schedules* – maintenance of learner motivation through regular use of enriching activities planned throughout the academic year. A drop in motivation may be partly explained by the extended gap between enrichment activities (such as trips, guest speakers, and practical activities)

- *Planning learner assessment schedules* – Applying the hourglass model makes sense from a knowledge retention and application perspective. At

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the point of acquiring knowledge and understanding within a subject, the
information retained by, understood and subsequently can be applied by
the learner may be greatest (fig 5.2(1)). As time passes this may diminish.
The hourglass visual illustrates the importance of an assessment
schedule that closely maps to curriculum delivery.

- *Developing programmes of study* – The hourglass concept can be applied
  across all elements of curriculum design in order to heighten and
  maintain learning motivation. A key consideration is the unit (unit of
  study within a programme) mix and spread across a programme of study
  within an academic year. There may be units that are historically
  favoured by learners. These may be spread evenly throughout the year
  and given adequate time in order to maintain learner interest and
  motivation.

Whilst a useful conceptual tool, the hourglass model has some limitations, such
as the over-reliance on the teacher's knowledge of their learners and the
resultant interpretation of their emotions. Whilst general feedback from the
learner voice during the first day at college may be overwhelmingly positive, this
does not guarantee a high level of emotional investment and or motivation to
learn. If a learner is anxious and/or uncertain about a programme of study,
implementing further 'motivational' interventions may heighten these negative
emotional responses. Blind application of the model may therefore result in an
opposite response to that intended. This limitation has not been fully explored
within the scope of this thesis and therefore is raised as a potential concern and
should be considered with caution, and whilst a potentially important finding,
the limitations of both timescale and scope of this research places this line of
inquiry beyond the remit of my investigation.

A further word of caution needs to be given to potential users regarding the
visual representation of the hourglass model and the associated limitations. The
hourglass model, like many models before, is not a perfect conceptual tool and
should be adapted for use within the context of specific research. Within this
thesis the primary purpose of the model is to represent the importance of time

and the ever diminishing amount of emotional capital following an intervention or critical incident. For this purpose the model provides a useful visual conceptual tool. However, potential criticisms of the hourglass model may include:

- *Learners have different amounts of emotional resource (capital)* – the amount of emotional capital available to a learner is represented by the sand within the model. It may be argued that there is significant differences in the starting points of each learner when considering their emotional resource (amount of sand in their hourglass), therefore it may be difficult to apply an accurate understanding of time passing and its impact on learner motivation if applying the model to a whole cohort.

- *Will learners' emotional resource inevitably become empty over time?* – The model suggests that over time there is inevitability that all learners' emotional resources will become spent. Whilst it may be argued that there is a limit to the emotional resource available to learners, it is the *inevitability* of an 'empty upper chamber' that potentially limits the use of the model, particularly if representing longitudinal studies. The hourglass can be turned, thus reversing the limitation and providing a potentially limitless emotional resource. How this is represented when using the model is important, i.e., the contextualization of the hourglass turning through intervention, activity, emotional response, etc.

Analysis and synthesis of findings: 4.2 Learning Cultures.

Analytic Category 3: Disruptions in Education

Key Findings – Another strong theme to emerge during data analysis is the significant impact disruptions in education can have on a learner's motivation to learn and subsequent progress in their studies. The data suggests that the impact can be positive or negative depending on the situational context. Key findings include:

- Disruptions in education (such as moving house) can significantly hinder a learner's progress in education. The primary factor evident being the increase in the number of life issues the learner has to cope with.
- Changes in staffing can significantly impact a learner's motivation towards their study.
- Disruptions in education that are well managed can have a positive impact on a learner's motivation to study and resultant progress in education.
- The relationship between the teacher and a student can have a significant impact on attendance and resultant motivation to learn.
- A learner's perception of a teacher's personality and/or approach to teaching can have an impact on their [the learner's] progress and early career pathway choices.

Whilst this research study has a constructivist thread running through the analytical and 'synthetical' discussion (particularly in the use of a life history approach and its application to education through the concept of learning/assessment cultures, etc.), the intended application of the knowledge gained through this research is to be contextualized to the modern student, the 'here and now'. It is for this reason that it is important to understand the learner context when discussing issues such as disruptions in education, teacher/student relationships, and career pathways. The following list highlights characteristics/features that are 'typical' of a student within the Level 3 Extended Diploma cohort at the study site. Whilst not all characteristics apply to all learners they do represent strong themes emerging during interviews and from the tutor's student/group contextual statements.

The typical L3 Extended Diploma Public Services student;

- Owns a smart phone and spends a minimum of three hours a day using it (average for cohort).
- Has a Facebook social network account (many learners within the level three cohort are linked to the colleges' Facebook account).
- Works part-time for twelve hours a week (typical employment roles include waiters/waitresses and retail assistants).
- Has a functional level of maths and English one level lower than that achieved through academic testing. E.g. achieving a 'C' grade (level two) in

maths and suggested to be working at level one through diagnostic testing.

- Prefers a mixture of 'hunter gatherer' (Bates, 2002) style learning through online research and practical activities with a 'hands-on' approach over traditional lecture-driven educational experiences.

- Prefers assignment-based assessment to exams.

- Have parents or grandparents who work or have worked in the industry they are pursuing.

These characteristics/features, that are typical of the student cohort studied within this research project, may help the discussion surrounding the key findings of this analytical category to be more easily understood. The first common thread that is to be discussed (disruptions in education) may be pertinent to earlier discussion of 'critical incidents'. These critical incidents (such as moving house, changes in staffing and teaching approach) can have varying degrees of both positive and negative impact on a learner's motivation to learn and resultant progress on their course depending on how they (the learner) perceive the issue and how the issue is managed. Importantly, such critical incidents may be beyond the learner's control. In Chapter Four I present Natalie White's story that refers to her moving house and school as a disruption. The lack of familiarity in a given situation may cause anxiety and resultant loss of motivation to learn for some students. This issue may be amplified if a learner moves to an educational institution outside of their town, and further amplified if moving to a different county, etc. Jenny Clarke's story, also presented in Chapter Four, reflects on her moving house and to a new area. The issue with familiarity is evident in Jenny's and Natalie's stories. Jenny highlights the issue with the lack of familiarity being compounded by the difficulty she found in adapting to her new environment. The following statement from Lucy Taylor supports this idea, she states:

> "When I came to college I missed the induction process and found it a bit difficult to get in with everyone. I felt like an outsider because everyone else had formed their groups and had developed friendships already."

This is interesting as it poses questions regarding how further educational institutions can support relocation and adaption to a new learning environment for learners who do not progress to them through the typical pathway via the local 'feeder' school. Exploration of the current methods used to facilitate student adaptation to further education from compulsory education within the study site highlight a number of planned initiatives, including:

- Open evenings
- Familiarisation/welcome events
- Faculty induction week
- Study skills sessions
- Fresher's Fair
- Student Services Helpdesk

Whilst these measures help prepare learners for their new academic environment, less evident at the study site are any specific interventions to support learners who progress to Mid-town College from outside of the local area in becoming familiar with local customs, colloquialisms, and accents. This may be an area of consideration for managers when developing student support services.

It is evident from the data presented in Chapter Four that some disruption to a learner's education may be connected to their relationship with a teacher/lecturer. Jack Green's story highlights that the disruption he experienced was borne out of a negative relationship with a teacher, which had a resultant negative impact on his motivation to attend and continue the course. It appears that the perceived relationship, from the learner's perspective, between a teacher and learner, regardless of its accuracy, can have a significant impact on learning motivation. The identification of consistency of teachers as a key factor in failure to reach one's potential was a common theme within the data. Natalie White attributes poor exams grades to a 'stand-in' teacher, stating; "I think I would have done better if I had the same teacher all the way through." Her story (presented in Chapter Four) refers to an unsettled staffing situation at her sixth form school. The issue of consistency does appear to resonate with the other key factors identified within this chapter. It can be suggested that factors such as 'familiarization' and 'teacher/student relationship' may be hindered by a lack of

consistency. However, the assumption here is that the factors that are consistent have a positive impact on a learner's motivation and resultant ability to achieve as well as expected. Consistently poor support/teaching is likely to have a negative impact on learning motivation.

Not all disruptions in education are perceived as negative in relation to progression or performance. Lucy Taylor's story, presented in Chapter Four, refers to time away from school due to an injury in a positive context. This example suggests that the impact of disruptions to a learner's education may be managed and result in either positive or negative outcomes. In the case of Lucy Taylor, the support and guidance of her parents in supporting her education whilst she was away from school coping with a back injury led to an increased revision focus and heightened motivation to learn (e.g. revise for exams). The investment response model (5.1) is useful here to understand how the investment in time, emotions and support from parents to their children during pivotal moments (including disruptions) in their educational careers can lead to a positive learner response, i.e. motivated and focused learning. The addition of the time variable (time lapsing from the pivotal moment/disruption) adds a further dimension to the investment response model and brings into discussion the concept of the hourglass model (5.2). There is opportunity to combine both models here in order to provide a more useful thinking tool.
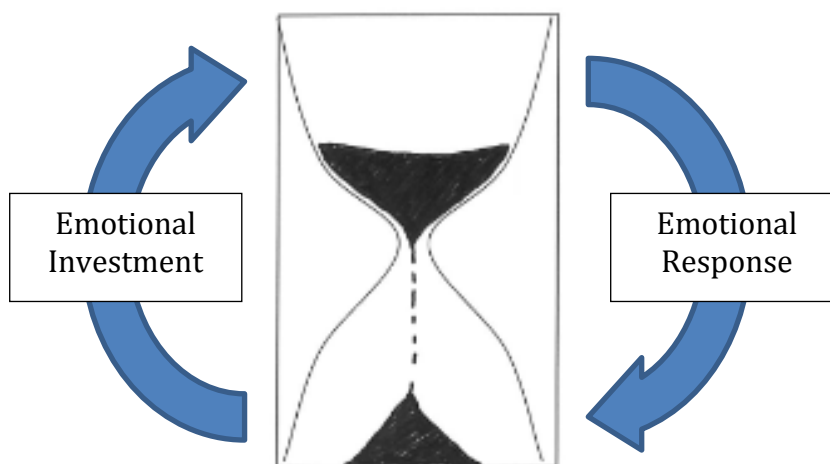

Figure 5.3 Maintaining learner motivation: tutor intervention though emotional investment.

Figure 5.3 provides a vivid visual that can be used to make sense of Lucy Taylor's situation. The falling sand in this instance represents the diminishing effectiveness of emotional investment over time lapsed. As time passes the opportunity for effective emotional intervention (in this instance from Lucy's parents) is reduced. The sand in the hourglass represents the value of emotional capital with more sand retained equating to a higher capital value. The investment/response arrows, as illustrated in figure 5.1, represent the emotional investment from the parent and resultant emotional response from the student. The sooner (after the pivotal moments/disruption) the parent invests emotionally in the student's situation the more sand (capital value) that is captured and the greater the emotional response.

Analytic Category 4: Assessment Preference

Key Findings – The final theme to be discussed within the scope of this thesis is assessment preference. The data collected suggests that learners prefer coursework assignments as opposed to summative exams (such as those used on A-level programmes). The following discussion explores why learners may have been motivated to study the BTEC programme due to the assessment methods associated with it. Key findings include:

- Learners chose the BTEC [education] pathway as opposed to A-levels due to the assessment methods used. Preferring coursework assignments rather than exams.
- Learners believe that A-levels are 'better' than BTECs, that is, viewed more favourably by employers.
- Learners believe that A-levels are 'harder' than BTEC qualifications.
- Learners believe BTEC programmes are more practical (taught through practical 'hands-on' activities) than A-level subjects.

It may be suggested that a learner's assessment preference is borne out of their own learning dispositions. It makes sense (to me) that a learner who prefers information seeking style learning would also have a preference for coursework over exams. The key issue for further exploration is the culture that exists in relation to a learning site and the learners, teachers and parents that influence this assessment culture. As discussed in Chapter Two (literature review),

Hodkinson *et al* (2007) indicate the following 'influences' as those that 'contribute significantly' to a learning/assessment culture:

- The positions, dispositions and actions of the students and tutors.
- The location and resources of the learning site.
- The syllabus or course specification (including the assessment and qualification specifications).
- The time tutors and students spend together and their inter-relationships.
- College management and procedures, together with funding and inspection body procedures and regulations, and government policy.
- Wider vocational and academic cultures, of which any learning site is part.
- Wider social and cultural values and practices, for example around issues of social class.
- Gender and ethnicity, the nature of employment opportunities, social and family life, and the perceived status of further education (FE) as a sector.

These 'influences' highlight the complex nature of learning cultures and suggests there to be a myriad of different opportunities for cultural intervention. These can range from interventions that impact more complex factors such as the systems of dispositions within a given social arena (in Bourdeusian terms '*habitus*'), to seemingly less complex structural influences such as the course specification and built physical environment. Whilst vast in scope the list of influences have strong social and emotional themes with key influential persons highlighted throughout.

The following figure (5.4) illustrates, from the learners' perspective, the key emotional influences in their education. The following influences: Peers – Teachers – Family – Employers are presented hierarchically with peers being the most influential and employers being the least influential. It is important to state that 'most' and 'least influential' are terms used within the context of the four identified key influences (Peers – Teachers – Family – Employers) with all of these being identified as highly influential. It is also important to state that the circles surrounding the model are a form of representation of the learners' holistic perspective of key influences throughout their entire programme of study. If breaking the academic programme down into smaller timeframes such as semesters, there may have been some movement regarding the key influences, e.g., employers may have become more important during the final semester, particularly in vocational learning where teaching and learning is said to be

'characterised by a clear line of sight to work' (CAVTL, 2013). Linking back to Bourdieu's (1986) notion of capital, employer engagement in a learners study programme may help learners to understand the value of education and training and the direct link to employment and economic capital. The CAVTL (2013) report highlights this stating:

> "A clear line of sight to work is critical because vocational learners must be able to see why they are learning what they are learning, understand what the development of occupational expertise is all about." (p.7)

It appears that clearly defining the link between employment and education is crucial if learners are to understand the full value and capital associated with vocational training. Manipulation of the circles of emotional influence, e.g. facilitating further employer engagement with a programme of study and the associated learning cohort.
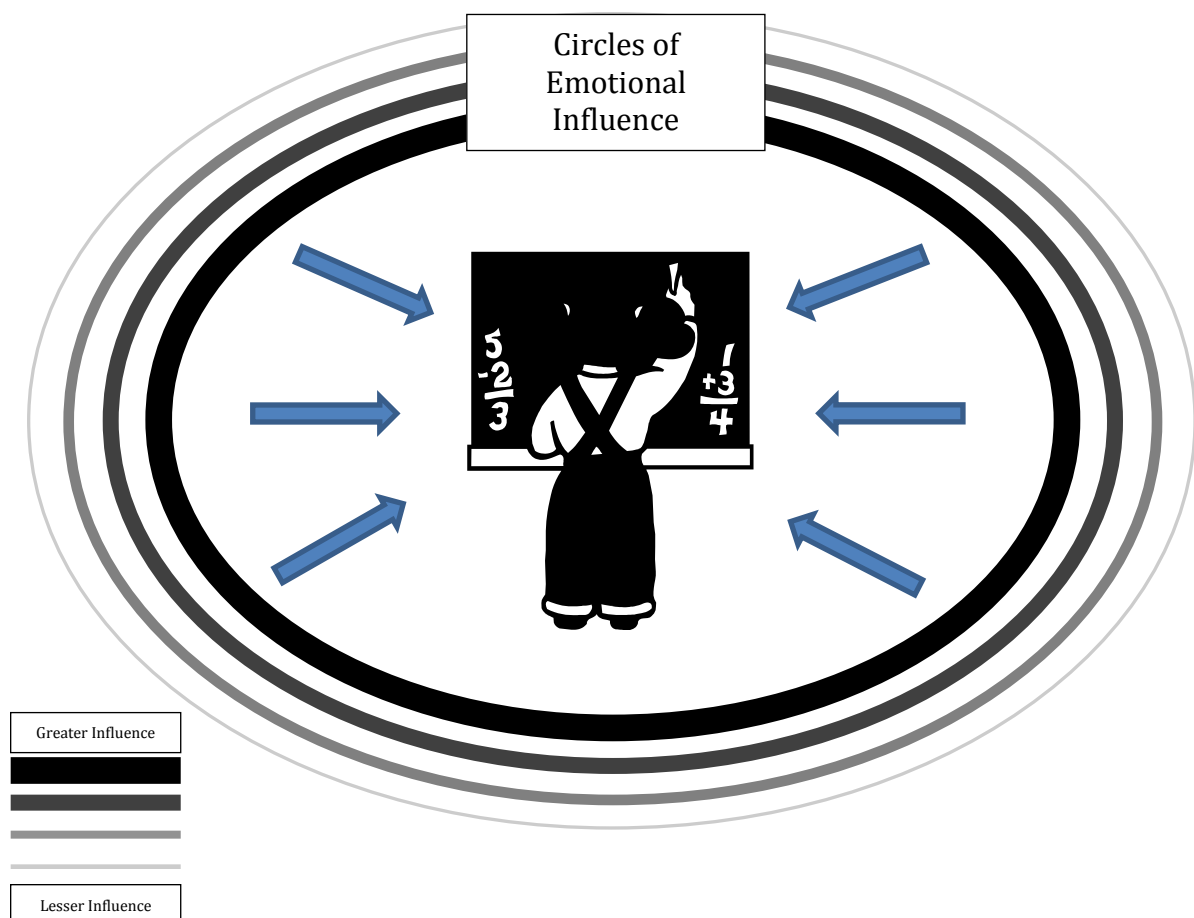

Figure 5.4 Hierarchical circles of emotional influences.

The circles of emotional influence are presented in figure 5.4 as four rings of different shades and thickness. The darker and thicker rings represent the greatest emotional influences and the lighter thinner rings represent lesser emotional influences. The proximity of the rings to the learner (illustrated in the centre of the figure) are used to emphasise the closeness or time spent with the various influences where (in this instance adolescent public service students) spend more time with their peers and less time with employers. The shade, thickness and proximity of the rings to the learner primarily illustrate the importance of these emotional influences from the learners' perspective. It can be suggested that in the cases of the learners interviewed, peers have a significant impact on the learning cultures and subsequent learning practice that is established within a cohort (programme group). Furthermore, teachers and managers need to understand the peer dynamic (influence of peers on peers) and consider this when developing interventions that support the development of a positive learning/assessment culture.

It is evident from the data collected that there are two key intertwined ideas at play that have a significant influence on a student's assessment preference. These are 1) the existing learning/assessment culture, and 2) the learner's assessment career, that is, their history of assessment experience and the learner's subsequent assessment dispositions. Neither of these are mutually exclusive of or independent of one another, indicating that one's assessment preference is both positional and dispositional in nature. To clarify, learners may have a tendency to prefer a certain type of assessment at a point in their assessment career that may have been influenced by their success or lack of. However, there may be a shift in the learner's preference from one type of assessment to another following a change in their level of success.

In Chapter Four I present Natalie White's story where she explains how she performs better in coursework as opposed to exams. Jenny Clarke has a similar view of assessment to Natalie White as expressed in her story (see Chapter Four). The views of Natalie and Jenny indicate that they believe they will be more successful studying the BTEC pathway as opposed to A-levels and this success factor was a primary consideration in the decision making process surrounding

the selection of their FE programme of study. Furthermore, these dispositions and assessment careers were transubstantiated from the school environment and fed into the developing assessment culture within the BTEC National Diploma Public Services cohort when they arrived at college. I use the term 'transubstantiated' as opposed to 'transferred' due to the high number of variables at play here and the impact these can have, resulting in some transformation of the [assessment] positions and dispositions of learners in their progression from compulsory education to further education. For example, a learner's attitude towards a particular type of assessment may change if the learner is faced with the reality of an institutions lack of choice of assessment and the understanding that this barrier to progress must be overcome if the learner is to continue on a set career path.

Given the complexity and dynamism of learning cultures and the associated assessment cultures, any interventions to support the positive development of these should consider the eight key influences on learning culture development (Hodkinson *et al*, 2007). However, these influences, whilst understood by teachers and managers, are difficult to manipulate at meso (college) and micro (classroom) levels when considered in their entirety. Referring to the earlier discussion surrounding the limits of teacher intervention, a practicable approach for implementation of interventions within a learning site may have specific emphasis on:

- the circles of emotional influence pertinent to the learner,
- the learner's assessment career, positions and dispositions and the transubstantiation process in their progression to further education,
- the seven key qualities [of the ideal employee] identified by employers (LEP, 2013),
- the investment/response model (fig 5.1) in consideration of emotional capital transaction between the learner and significant others,
- the hourglass model (fig 5.2) in consideration of the 'time boundedness' surrounding emotional capital and its effective use,
- the characteristics/features, that are typical of the student cohort in question, and,

- the macro/meso level structures that influence, and support mechanisms available for learners.

Maintaining learner motivation: progressing the investment/response (fig. 5.1), hourglass (fig. 5.2) and hierarchical circles of emotional influence (5.4) models.
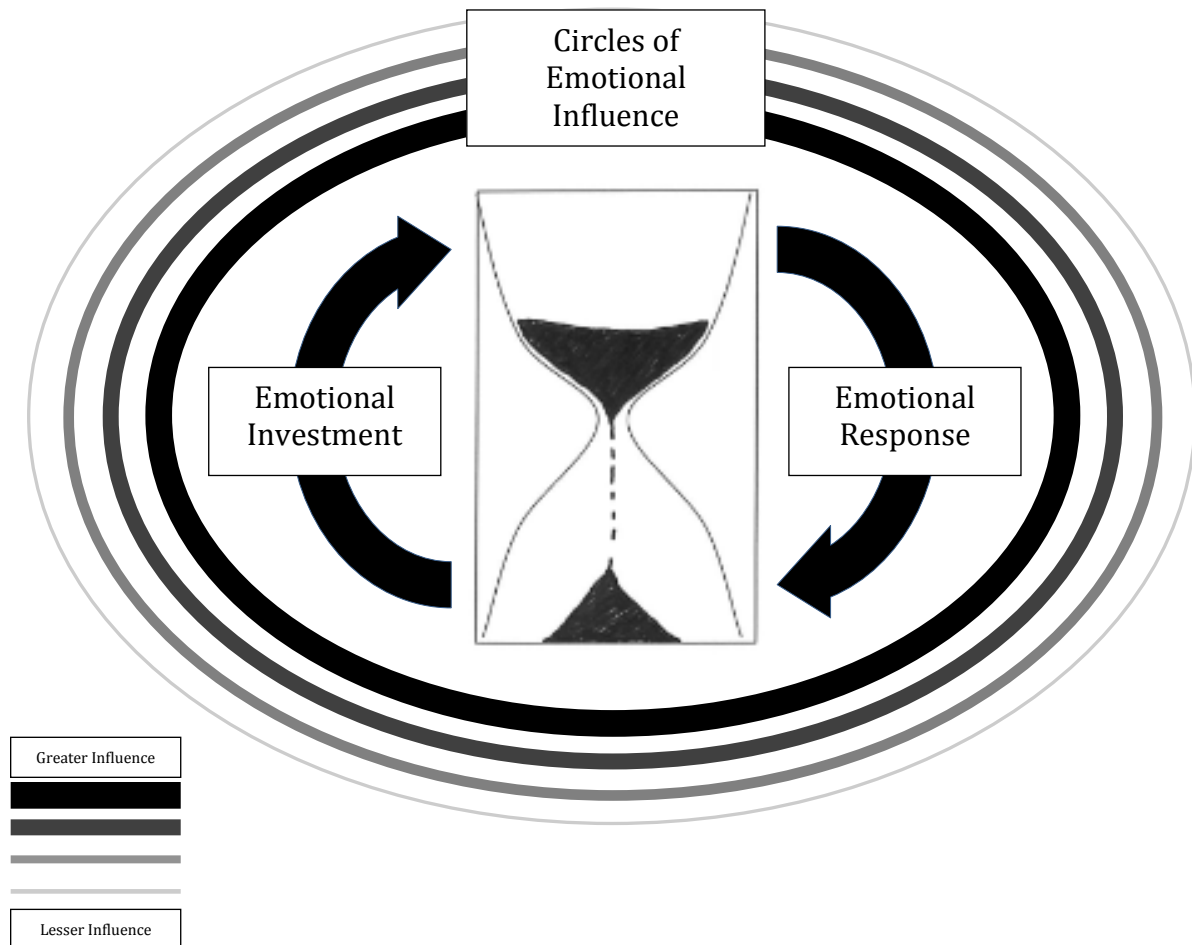
Figure 5.5 Maintenance of learner motivation in consideration of the hierarchical circles of emotional influences.

Figure 5.5 knits together the investment/response, hourglass, and circles of emotional influence models in order to gain a holistic perspective of the variables at play and discussed within this chapter. As these variables are not mutually exclusive of one another, and are in a state of continual flux, I feel it is necessary to progress the previously discussed models through their combination into one conceptual tool. In this model (fig 5.5), the conceptual considerations pertinent

to the investment/response, hourglass and circles of emotional influence models remain and are now considered in relation to each other. For example, the emotional investment from a mother (umbrella term – see note 1) into her son's/daughter's education will result in an emotional response represented by the curved arrows in the centre of the model. This emotional response may be influenced by significant others such as peers and the learner's teachers, represented by the circles of emotional influence, and may also be time constrained as represented by the hourglass. This model therefore challenges the user to consider wider key and often opposing influences whilst still retaining a simplistic and therefore workable/usable tool for meso and micro level strategy/intervention development.

The model could be used by Curriculum Managers at the planning stage to inform the development of programmes of study; and by teachers/tutors when developing specific components of a learner's study programme. Curriculum Managers may use the tool holistically to plan the full academic year. The hourglass aspect of the tool will facilitate consideration of time, the ever diminishing value of emotional capital, and the need for early intervention to maximize learner/learning motivation. Facilitating learners' early success through a well-planned assessment strategy, along with early contact with parents/carers through effective communication (perhaps through an early parents evening), and involvement of employers (to highlight the value of education) from the outset of the programme may help learners' to understand the value of their course and 'set the scene' for the adoption of a positive learning culture.

The emotional investment of teaching staff at this early stage (college induction week) is important here. Considering the investment/response aspect of the model, Curriculum Managers should carefully consider how teachers are timetabled at this early stage to ensure they have enough time to engage fully in the induction activities with their tutees/learners. Additional activities such as report writing should be avoided, and an effective cover strategy needs to be in place to ensure that programme teams are not 'spread thinly' in the event of staff illness/absence. It may be argued that these points are pertinent throughout the

entire academic year. I believe they are, however, considering the hourglass model and ever-diminishing emotional capital, these points may have greater importance at the start of the academic year. Whilst a teacher's wider commitments such as report writing cannot be mitigated entirely, managers may use the model to consider the prioritisation of activities at different points throughout the academic year and how this maps against a learner's study programme.

The circles of influence aspect of the model may be considered in planning curriculum interventions. For example, parents or peers may be of greater influence (the inner circles) to learners during the initial stages of their programme of study when their progression goal (employment/university) may appear in the distant future. Managers and teachers may therefore plan activities throughout the initial stages that focus on these groups, e.g. facilitating the establishment of peer study groups, or maintaining close contact with parents/carers. As learners progress towards the end of their programme of study and their progression goals become a greater focus, employers may become a greater influence and occupy the inner circles of the model. Managers may plan activities such as industry guest speakers, visits to universities and employment/HE bridging weeks during the final term. However, this may be influenced by the assessment strategy pertinent to the programme of study.

Review of findings against the assumptions presented in Chapter One.

At the outset of this research project I detailed four primary assumptions that were established through review of historical data sets, discussions with relevant members of teaching staff, and my own personal experiences working within further education settings. The rationale for each of the assumptions is stated in Chapter One. The following section of this chapter will take each of the assumptions in turn and use the data collected and presented in Chapter Four to support or refute these statements.

Assumption 1: Learners starting vocational programmes of study at Mid-town College believe that they are on a sub-standard programme of study when compared to those starting A-levels which is seen as the gold standard.

This assumption is generally supported through the data presented in Chapter Four and through the following statements from Natalie White, Jack Green and Ben White.

Natalie White stated:

> "I originally picked A-levels because it would be better as a fallback [qualification] if I didn't want to go in [to the uniformed services]."

The comment from Natalie suggests that she believes the A-level to have more value in wider society than the BTEC.

Jack Green speaks of his desire to study A-levels:

> "I wouldn't have had the grades to go and study A-levels as my best grade was a 'D'. If I had got better grades I probably would have applied for A-levels. Everyone wants to do A-levels. It would give me more options. I think employers prefer A-levels, I think 'A-levels' sound better."

Ben White stated:

> "I think the A-levels are worth more [than the BTEC] though I picked the BTEC because I thought I would enjoy it. I only considered A-levels for a bit because I was in the top sets in school and everyone in the top sets does A-levels."

However, in contrary to the above statements, Lucy Taylor believes the BTEC programme is the 'best one' to prepare her for her chosen career:

> "I think the public services course is good because it gives you a gateway into the services because it goes into depth about what you want to know about getting in and what life is going to be like. I think that the BTEC is as valuable as A-levels because it is vocational and is geared towards the jobs that you want to do. There isn't an A-level in public services and this course is the best one to prepare me for my career."

Whilst the assumption is refuted in the statement from Lucy, the evidence supporting the assumption is significantly greater (in terms of the number of statements, the number of correlations between multiple participants, and the strength of each of the individual statements). Therefore, in consideration of the

balance of evidence, the assumption is upheld. This is further supported through the findings presented in the TRLP (2006) 14-19 Commentary Report where the value of well-established educational pathways are discussed;

> "Some individuals chose to follow well-established paths, notably the academic track, that have clear trajectories with well-understood processes and destinations. Those who do not follow this path are faced with a set of less familiar choices, where outcomes may be uncertain and it is less clear how to choose between the options." (p.9)

The lack of understanding (employers, parents and schools) of vocational education pathways may have impacted the learner's perception of the value of the BTEC qualification. The TRLP (2006) report continues;

> "In the debate about the consequences of separate academic and vocational tracks, the assumption that those not 'achieving' at age 14 of 16 should follow a vocational route is itself a significant barrier to enhancing vocational provision." (p.10)

This excerpt supports the idea that vocational education is perceived to be a 'lesser' option and thus supports the statements from participants and assumption that learners starting vocational courses believe that they are on a sub-standard programme of study when compared to those starting A-levels.

Assumption 2: Students on vocational programmes such as a BTEC National Diploma in Public Services are less likely to aspire to go to university than A-level students.

Whilst this assumption is supported with regards to historical progression data, the latest data (Progression Statistics, 2013) suggests that more vocational learners are progressing to HEIs and are performing well on undergraduate courses. From the 2012/13 finishing cohort (Extended Diploma Public Services) 73% have progressed to a HE course. Closer examination of the progression data highlights that of the 41 (from 56) progressing to HE, 46% of these (19 from 41) are undertaking a subject specific foundation degree programme (FdA Uniformed Services) at the same FE institute as they studied their level three programme. The assumption can therefore be supported or refuted dependent on the context of the question. More learners appear to be progressing to HE

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level courses, though far fewer go on to study at a university in its traditional sense (an honours level programme run at a higher education institution).

Assumption 3: All learners who enrol onto a further education vocational programme do so because they want to.

The data presented in Chapter Four both supports and refutes this assumption. In support of the assumption, Natalie White states:

> "I chose to study Public Services because I want to go into the RAF, because my parents were in the Navy and all and I want to be in the forces and I go to Air Cadets. I'm a sergeant in the Air cadets. I have a lot of responsibility. I want that lifestyle."

Ben White's statement suggests he chose the BTEC route as he believed A-level study would be 'too hard' for him:

> "I was going to do A-levels and I didn't want to do them. I was pushed into it. I thought A-levels would be too hard. I don't want to go to university so I think this course is right for me. I decided before my exams that I wanted to be a Police Officer. If I got better results at GCSE I still wouldn't have chosen to do A-levels because I wouldn't enjoy them."

Chris Manley reflects on his decision to transfer from A-level study to the BTEC programme:

> "I started doing A-levels at the university campus (Maths, Government and Politics, Drama and History) though because I was interested in the RAF I thought I would be best suited to the Public Services course. I like the hands-on approach to learning and the course is definitely the right choice for my chosen career."

The above statements suggest that the learner had a choice in their progression pathway and made the decision to study the BTEC pathway. In contrast, the following statement from Jack Green refutes the assumption:

> "I wouldn't have had the grades to go and study A-levels as my best grade was a 'D'. If I had got better grades I probably would have applied for A-levels.

The statement from Jack indicates the lack of choice available to him due to his GCSE grade profile. Given the choice, Jack would have selected the A-level education pathway. It is evident that the assumption, whilst supported by the

majority of cases, cannot be applied to all learners within this case study. Therefore the assumption must be refuted. However, whilst refuted, the balance of evidence would support a statement where the majority of learners enrol onto a further education vocational programme do so because they want to.

Assumption 4: Learners on vocational programmes of study that are not assessed through formal examinations are 'goal outcome oriented' wanting the diploma certificate and not necessarily the knowledge.

The data presented in Chapter Four supports this assumption, particularly the data presented under sub theme 4.2.9: Goal Outcome Oriented.

Chapter summary.

This chapter discussed the experiences of a sample of BNDPS learners in order to understand what influences their motivation to learn and achieve their full potential. In summary the discussion illustrates the multifaceted and complex nature of learner/learning motivation and highlighted the importance of social structure/influences in the development, shaping and maintenance of learning cultures within a learning site. More specifically, the discussion in this chapter highlights the importance of significant others (peers, parents, teachers, etc.) in influencing learners and learning sites and situations and the reciprocal nature of emotional investment in education, whether from the teacher (reciprocated by the learner) or learner (reciprocated by the teacher and/or peers).

This chapter introduced a range of conceptual models to help teachers and managers understand the complex and multifaceted nature of learning/learner motivation and provides a useful planning tool for curriculum design and intervention. These models can help teachers and managers to understand the key transactions and transubstantiations between learners, parents, teachers, and peers from a Bourdeusian perspective thus understanding the value of various capitals (namely cultural and emotional) and how they interact within the network of fields that are at play at the educational site.

Finally, the chapter highlights that emotional capital can be considered in two guises: 1) emotional responses that are time constrained, and, 2) the emotional development that occurs through learning and experience (such as resilience) and that both can be linked to either an emotional 'state' or a learned 'trait'. This chapter also highlights which capitals are of most value to the learners themselves and provides and insight into how different perspectives of the value of the various capitals at play within one's *habitus* influences decision making processes.

Researcher bias – I feel it is important at the summary stage of the discussion chapter to reinforce the human factor related to this study, the fact that I was the primary instrument for data gathering and that my status as a senior manager at the college site studied heightened the potential for additional bias. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) state:

> "Remembering that the human factor is both the greatest strength and the fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis, the researcher recognizes the subjective nature of the claims he or she is makes regarding the meaning of the data." (p.150)

The key statement within the above quote is the 'researcher recognition'. I have acknowledged from the outset of this study that in addition to being the 'primary instrument' there will be possible additional bias in data collection and analysis due to my position within the study site. In recognition of this, and in order to minimize this potential limitation, I engaged in continuous critical reflection with colleagues and my research supervisors. The story presented within this thesis may have been told differently by another researcher, therefore, this chapter presents my understanding of the data, associated connections and meanings.

Endnotes:

1. The use of the term 'parent(s)' within this chapter is an umbrella term that covers all types of parental responsibility (where there is a caring parental relationship) and may include 'mother', 'father', 'guardian' and maybe 'carer'. However, I understand that not all learners will have a strong emotional bond with a parental figure due to their personal circumstances.

2. The term 'teacher' within this chapter covers the extended roles and responsibilities of a person employed as a lecturer/teacher within a Further Education setting, that is, not simply limited to teaching/lecturing and includes the additional responsibilities of tutoring, providing

pastoral care, mentoring and having *loco parentis* over learners within their sessions and/or care, i.e. their tutees.

Chapter Six

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore learning motivation and why some students following vocational programmes of study do not achieve as well as expected as indicated through value added score data. The conclusions from this study follow the research questions set in Chapter One, the findings presented in Chapter Four and the discussion set out in Chapter Five and therefore address four areas: (a) the importance of the social aspect of education on learning motivation; (b) the impact of critical incidents on a learner's motivation towards their studies; (c) disruptions to a learner's education and the impact of these on learning motivation; and (d) the impact of a learner's preferred assessment type on their motivation to follow and complete a programme of study. What follows is a discussion of these prominent themes from the findings, and the conclusions drawn. My recommendations and final reflections on this study close the chapter.

Conclusions

Whilst there is some interconnectedness and crossover between the four themes, they do fall into the two broader categories presented in Chapter Four, (4.1) emotional capital and (4.2) learning cultures. Therefore, my conclusions are set out under the sub-sections of these categories, following on from the discussion presented in Chapter Five.

The importance of the social aspect of education

The first major finding of this research is that all students in this study indicated that the social aspect of education is highly important to their ongoing motivation to learn. All students indicated that their peers (friends and classmates on their programmes of study) are the most influential persons to success in their studies. Peers have a significant impact on a learner's enjoyment of the educational experience and subsequently their attendance, punctuality

and attitude towards learning both within and outside of taught sessions. A conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that learners who enrol upon vocational programmes of study are likely to value the view of their peer group and the feeling of belonging associated with it. This reinforces the idea discussed in Chapter Two of 'learning as a social practice' (James and Biesta, 2007). The impact of the peer group on learning motivation must not be underestimated by teachers and managers. This study concludes that the first half term, in particular the first two to four weeks, are important in supporting the establishment of a base learning culture for a new cohort embarking on their programme of study. The 'forming' and 'storming' stages of group development (Tuckman, 1965[1]) should be carefully managed by teachers and tutors through carefully constructed induction programmes that include suitable ice-breaker and team building exercises. This will support a positive ethos and facilitate the development of a positive social environment that may in turn support the development of a positive learning culture. However, as discussed in Chapter Five, the opportunity for teachers to influence positive change to learning motivation through group manipulation is limited and the 'management' of the forming and storming stages of group development should occur via the use of strategies and interventions. For example, the careful planning of the induction period of the programme of study and the consideration of activities that facilitate the adoption of a positive learning culture.

It is also concluded that early communication with and involvement of parents/guardians can be useful to teachers and managers in developing a positive learning culture. The investment/response model discussed in Chapter Five (fig 5.1) details the positive benefits of a parent's emotional investment in their child's education. It is useful for managers and teachers to consider this aspect of a learner's social network when planning a learner's educational support system during the tutorial process and development of a learner's individual learning plan (ILP). In addition, it can be concluded that the emotional capital transubstantiated through emotional investment (manifested as behaviours conducive to a positive learning experience/environment), from

parent/teacher to student is reciprocal and may facilitate the formation and maintenance of a positive learning culture.

The final conclusion presented for this subsection emphasizes the importance of the teacher-student relationship in motivating learners. A friendly, mutually respectful relationship between the teacher and student, one that involves the use of humour and the teacher's knowledge of a learner's wider interests such as hobbies, sporting interests, etc. will positively impact learning motivation. In addition, it is concluded that consistency in the teacher-student relationship, where positive, may support learning motivation. This is due to the importance of 'familiarity' in establishing and maintaining an educational environment conducive to learning. Where full consistency is not possible (e.g. if a teacher leaves through ill health, promotion, etc.), disruption may be minimized through the implementation of pre-planned contingency measures. An example of a pre-planned contingency measure is the effective timetabling of teaching staff teams. Situations where one person is solely responsible for the delivery of a set unit/module of study is a high risk to consistency and continuity. If the sole member of staff leaves at short notice then the learning environment may become less consistent. Careful timetabling that leads to larger staffing teams may help preserve consistency as responsibilities and knowledge of the programme and learners is shared amongst multiple staff. Another example of a pre-planned contingency measure that may help preserve a consistent learning environment is careful succession planning. Staff training and continued professional development opportunities such as graduate traineeships, middle and senior management development programmes and shadowing opportunities may add depth to teaching and managing teams where members of staff can 'step up/in' to undertake a role in a short, medium or long-term post.

The impact of critical incidents

The second major finding of this research is that critical incidents, both positive and negative can a) have a significant impact on learning motivation and b) if negative, may have a diminishing impact on learning motivation over time. It can be concluded from these findings that the quicker teachers and managers can

respond to a critical incident that occurs to a learner, the greater the amount and value of emotional capital that is available for use for learning motivation. The hourglass model (fig 5.2) provides a vivid conceptual tool that depicts the sand (emotional capital/learning motivation) as continuously diminishing. This idea is key in the consideration of any intervention where utilizing maximum available emotional capital is a priority. It can also be concluded that the use of available emotional capital can result in either a positive or negative impact on learning motivation dependent on the catalyst for the emotional capital and/or transaction of emotional capital between teacher and learner. Therefore teachers and managers who use the hourglass conceptual tool, should do so cautiously and with consideration of their knowledge of the learner, adapting the model to the context of the situation.

Disruptions in education

The third major finding of this research is that disruptions to a learner's education can significantly hinder their progress in their studies. However, if these disruptions are well managed (e.g. through tutorial support, advice and guidance, welfare and counselling support, etc.), any negative impact may be minimized or mitigated completely. In addition, the relationship between a student and significant others such as teachers and parents can impact upon learning motivation and the learner's interpretation, understanding and response to a disruption to their education. Correlating with the preceding discussion of critical incidents, it can be concluded that the timing of any interventions aimed at maintaining or heightening learning motivation during a period of educational disruption is important. The hourglass model (fig 5.2) can be used to help with the visualization of the diminishing opportunity to influence a learner's understanding of and resultant response to an educational disruption prior to them establishing and reinforcing their own interpretation.

It can be concluded that familiarity with one's environment, educational and social cultures, social settings, and peer group is an important consideration in developing learning motivation interventions. There are many systems in place to help learners become familiar with college processes, procedures,

opportunities and support mechanisms. However, there are limited formal systems in place to support learners who progress to the college from outside of the local area in becoming familiar with local customs, colloquialisms, understanding of accents, and local community cultures. Some learners may be indirectly marginalized by not being accustomed to local community cultures.

Assessment preference

The final major finding of this research is that students studying vocational programmes have a tendency to prefer coursework assignments as an assessment method over formal examinations. This preference was a key factor in both their choice of educational pathway when deciding to study either A-levels or the BTEC qualification and prior success at GCSE. Learners believe that A-levels are harder, more valuable (viewed more favourably by employers and universities) and more theoretical than BTEC programmes. From these findings it can be concluded that a learner's assessment preference is borne out of their own learning dispositions, and more specifically, it is linked to their preferred learning patterns and the successes and failures with various assessment methods they have experienced throughout their educational careers. In addition, the present learning and assessment culture that a learner is both influencing and being influenced by is an important determinant of their current assessment preference. As both these factors cannot be mutually exclusive of or independent of one another they should be considered in the development of individual learning plans and programme assessment strategies.

As a learner's previous success or failure with a particular assessment method influences their current assessment preference, it can be concluded that early success with various assessment methods during the initial stages of a programme of study may influence the formation of a positive assessment culture. In consideration of this, teachers and personal tutors need to be aware of a learner's assessment career upon starting a programme of study and implement a learning difficulty curve[2] that is appropriate to the learner to facilitate initial success with all assessment methods that are to be used throughout the programme. Through using this approach learners can be

stretched and challenged with an assessment method they are confident with whilst realizing early success in another assessment method where they are less confident. Over time, through using an appropriate learning difficulty curve, the students may be stretched and challenged using all methods of assessment. Manipulation of learning difficulty curves for each assessment method will facilitate initial success whilst retaining stretch and challenge. Success in a particular assessment method, one that a learner least prefers and has had little past success with, may support the adoption of a positive assessment culture and potential change in or rebalancing of a learner's assessment preference. In contrast, blind application of assessment methods without utilizing an appropriate learning difficulty curve is likely to reproduce the learner's current disposition for assessment and reinforce the negative feelings and motivation related to failure with that method. There is a link here to students' resilience and the work of Ecclestone and Hayes (2008) who believe an emerging therapeutic ethos in education may be detrimental to learning as it may facilitate the cultivation of a 'diminished self' (Furedi, 2004). Ecclestone and Hayes (2008, cited in Mintz, 2009, p.635) state:

> "The new therapeutic ethos reveals a decline in what we think children and young people are capable of, refracted through the prism of what policy makers and the emotional well-being industry think they need… The collapse of belief in human potential is palpable… Therapeutic education inserts vulnerability and anxiety."

Mintz (2009) suggests that to join Ecclestone and Hayes (2008) in their 'scepticism of therapeutic educational practices' one must 'reject the idea of educating the emotions' (p.638). As the findings of my study supports the notion of 'emotional capital' and the importance associated with 'the reciprocal nature of emotional investment in education', I cannot reject the idea of educating the emotions. Kristjansson (2007) has a different view of therapeutic education that draws on the 'Aristotelian idea of the fusion of the heart and mind' (Mintz, 2009). Kristjansson believes that 'emotional virtue' should be evident within the curriculum and that emotional intelligence can be learned. In Chapter Five I developed this idea further discussing emotions as resources that can be exchanged within transactions. I therefore favour the pragmatic view of Kristjansson when considering therapeutic education, understanding that

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distinguishing between effective and ineffective therapeutic practices is more beneficial to learning motivation than a complete rejection of emotional education.

Recommendations

The following recommendations based on the findings, analysis and conclusions of this study are offered for:

  (a) Curriculum and quality assurance managers of vocational further education.
  (b) Leaders and teachers of vocational further education programmes of study.
  (c) Recommendations for further research.

Recommendations for curriculum and quality managers of vocational further education

Curriculum and quality managers in further education who have responsibility for developing and shaping vocational programmes of study might usefully consider (there is no order of importance or rank to the following recommendations):

  1. Developing student support systems to facilitate learner familiarity with local cultures, colloquialisms, customs and accents. This consideration is particularly important for learners who progress to the college from outside of, or are new to, the local area. When planning these support systems consideration should be given to the activities to be completed and information received by learners during the enrolment and induction process. In addition, reactive systems could be pre-planned for learners who join programmes of study after the induction period has been completed. This recommendation links to two key arguments within this thesis, 1) the importance of the social aspect of education on learning motivation, and 2) disruptions to a learner's education and the potential impact of these on learning motivation. The development of support systems can help minimize the negative impact of disruption to a learner's

education and increase familiarity with and consistency of education from a social perspective.

2. The development of strategies for early communication to and involvement of parents/guardians in developing the learner's individual learning plans (ILPs). This recommendation is pertinent to the early stages of a learner's programme of study and I emphasize the importance of moving learners towards independency over time in order to better prepare them for Higher Education study or employment where the involvement of parents/guardians is not expected. This recommendation is linked to the key argument supporting the positive benefits of a parent's emotional investment in their child's education and how this relates to the social aspect of education and its impact on learning motivation.

3. The importance of familiarity in establishing and maintaining a consistent educational environment that is conducive to learning. In particular, the issues relating to timetabling (staffing, rooming and times/days) and specifically the use of staffing within a faculty staff cover strategy. Particularly important is the contingency planning for the disruption of education in any way, e.g. teachers leaving. This recommendation links to the key argument that familiarity to one's environment, educational and social cultures, social settings, and peer group is an important consideration in developing learning motivation interventions. In addition, there is a link to the key argument that the negative impact of disruptions in education may be minimized or mitigated completely if managed appropriately and timely by teachers and managers.

4. The use of the hourglass model and the importance of maintaining learning motivation when planning a learner's programme of study over the academic year. Regular motivation initiatives could be planned throughout the academic year in order to minimize the 'peaks and troughs' in learners' levels of learning motivation and maintain a

consistent positive level of learning motivation throughout the entire programme of study. This recommendation links to a number of key arguments within this thesis, in particular the positive impact of a consistent educational environment on learning motivation, and that continued emotional investment from teachers and parents will support the development of a positive learning culture (investment/response model).

Recommendations for leaders and teachers of vocational further education programmes

Lecturers and teachers who have responsibility for the leading and delivery of vocational further education programmes of study could consider (there is no order of importance or rank to the following recommendations):

1. Capturing a learner's assessment preference early in or prior to the start of their programme of study and using this information to develop appropriate individualized assessment strategies. There are many educational tools that support the teacher's/learner's understanding of the learner's preferred/optimum learning style (Kolb, 1985 and Honey and Mumford, 2006). Similar concepts could be adapted to understand a learner's assessment preference. I emphasize the need to exercise caution here. Assessment preferences may be useful during the initial stages of a learner's programme of study in order to provide an opportunity for early success, however, other assessment methods should be introduced later to ensure the learner is being developed in preparation for Higher Education or employment. This recommendation is linked to the key argument centered on assessment preference and that a learner's previous success or failure with a particular assessment method influences their current assessment preference. Early success with various assessment methods during the initial stages of a new programme of study may help rebalance a learner's negative disposition towards certain assessment types.

2. The impact on the development of a positive learning culture when planning teambuilding/induction activities that may precede programmes of study. This recommendation links to the social aspect of a learner's programme of study and the key argument that influencing positive change to learning motivation through group manipulation is limited and the 'management' of group development via the use of early strategies and interventions may be more useful for teachers and programme leaders.

3. Their own approach and behaviours and the impact of these on learning motivation. In particular, the emotional investment in the learners learning experience. This recommendation links to the social aspects of a learning motivation and specifically to the investment/response model detailed in Chapter Five.

4. How a learner's induction programme best facilitates their familiarity of the environment, programme of study and key persons involved with the programme (teachers and peers). E.g. introduction of learner familiarity days throughout the summer and prior to enrolment, email communication and welcome information sent to learners, and signposting of the clubs and social networks available at the college. This recommendation links specifically to the key argument that familiarity to one's environment, educational and social cultures, social settings, and peer group is an important consideration in developing learning motivation interventions.

5. The use of the conceptual tool(s) developed within this thesis (combined - hourglass model, investment/response model and circles of influence model) to inform teaching/tutorial design and scheduling in consideration of the impact of time on emotional capital and the value of interventions, administered by significant others, at key moments within a learners programme of study. This recommendation refers holistically

to the key arguments discussed within this thesis and specifically in Chapter Five.

Recommendations for further research

It is recommended that further studies are conducted in order to expand on the limited dataset used within this study. A wider base of information would provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' motivations towards learning and achievement. In light of this, the following should be considered (there is no order of importance or rank to the following recommendations):

1. Due to the limitations of this study being centred on BTEC Public Services students during the first year of their course, a study of a wider range of vocational courses and programmes of study (e.g. other Service Sector provision such as Health and Social Care, Early Years, Hospitality and Catering, Hotel and Event Management, etc.), over the full duration of the course, should be conducted to assess the extent to which the same or similar findings would be evident. In addition, widening the study base with further researchers and curriculum types and areas, will help correct any researcher bias that may be associated with this thesis.

2. Further research using the same criteria should be taken among learners who considered the BTEC route and then progressed to study A-levels to compare and contrast the experiences of learners of both vocational and academic pathways.

3. Further research to explore the destinations of learners and the impact of their achieved value added score on their life choices, opportunities and outcomes to understand if there are any significant similarities or differences between those learners that achieve as highly as expected in FE and those who do not.

4. Further research to explore an emerging theme that I will term 'moral capital inhibition' – this is the tendency to not use one's emotional capital

in an immoral or amoral way thus rendering the capital meaningless in a given context. Examples could be the faking of friendship (Duncombe and Jessop, 2002) or use of highly emotional critical incidents as a method for compliance. Whilst emotional capital may diminish in value over time, some emotional capital may bring about moral and ethical dilemmas and thus needs to be considered carefully in how it can be used by teachers and managers.

5. Further research to measure the impact of these suggested recommendations for effectiveness, both within own (Mid-town College) and other settings.

Consideration of the recommendations in light of the 'more for less' agenda – While writing these recommendations I reflect back to the opening chapter of this thesis and the identification of the 'more for less' agenda. Having worked in FE for many years I understand the difficulty teachers and managers face when responding to changes in external scrutiny and funding. With the more for less agenda, teachers and managers are required to achieve more with less funding. In light of this challenge, I have developed recommendations that are to be considered at the curriculum planning stage and embedded into existing processes. The use of the conceptual models could be introduced through college INSET (in service training), however, careful consideration is to be given to how the strategy/system development recommendations can be adopted without further increasing the workloads of teachers and managers. In addition, I believe that the recommendations presented in this chapter, if given careful consideration, can have a significant impact on the development of a positive learning environment, the development of a positive learning culture, and positively impact learning motivation within FE vocational settings. I therefore, suggest that time and resource allocated to these activities would bring good value for money to organisations and should be prioritised by managers when setting budget allocations.

Considerations in light of the current education landscape – Much of this thesis focuses on the transition from school to further education and the educational careers the young person brings with them to mid-town college. It is important to note the changing educational landscape and the opportunities this may bring with regards to this transition. The academy movement[3] has led to the development of multi-academy trusts (MATs) where FE colleges can become sponsors of MATs and therefore develop closer relationships with secondary academies. This will lead to greater opportunity for joined-up thinking and approaches to the school to college transition. This opportunity for closer collaboration between education providers is facilitated by a new Common Inspection Framework (CIF)[4] that brings together different education settings and providers under one coherent framework. In light of this opportunity for closer collaboration my final recommendation is for college principals, school headteachers, academy principals and MAT chief executives to establish arrangements to work more closely with regards to learner transition between their respective institutions.

Reflections on Bourdieu's capitals and motivation theory - At the outset of my study I decided on the use of Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' particularly, his forms of capital (1986), as the conceptual framework for this thesis. My reason for this was to provide a structure to analytic thinking in order to make sense of the potential power relationships that may exist within the education arena. In addition, I sought to understand what is seen as valuable, and how these valuable assets may impact learning motivation through transactions between learners and significant others within the educational field. Bourdieu's thinking tools, particularly 'capital', have enabled me to situate emotions as commodities within the context of education and to explore the exchange value associated with these forms of capital. From a Bourdieusian perspective I have come to better understand the power relationships in the field of education and that capital fluctuates and transubstantiates from one form to another. In his 2012 study of the exchange value of mathematics education Williams states:

> "Bourdieu's sociology goes straight to the process of exchange and of the value of 'cultural' capitals in the fields he analyses (including

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education) and of their exchange rates in the field of power, ultimately economic and monetary power in capitalism." (p.66)

Williams (2012) then aims to qualify the above statement with the following example:

> "…economic capital helps the dominant classes develop their children's educational capital: They spend money to help advance their educational careers, the children and parents thereby work to exchange economic capital into 'educational capital'." (p.66)

Whilst Williams discusses the advantages of the 'middle class', my study focusses in on emotional capital, a form of capital that transcends social stratification and may be accumulated through 'emotional labour' (Reay, 2000) or the 'invisible labour' (Hutchinson, 2012) evident through the strong emotional bonds within family groups. In reinforcing the focus of my study I do not dismiss the potential of class related cultural capital. A 'middle class *habitus*' may include greater 'capital stock' than a 'working class *habitus*' as cultural and economic capital may be greater. Williams (2012) states:

> "…middle class children are better attuned to school activity and discourses by virtue of their parents' pedagogic work: In part, this is a function of the family's cultural as well as economic capital, not only having the spare time but also the educational competence to prepare their children." (p.66

I support the notion that an appropriately structured *habitus* can help children develop a 'natural feel for the game' (Williams, 2012) in education and therefore be more likely to achieve as well as expected.

Another key Bourdieusian reflection on education is the 'symbolic violence' inflicted on the dominated. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) suggest that the methods used to assess learning or competence in education practice are ideologically perceived to be fair though at the same time they inflict symbolic violence. Williams (2012) attempts to explain this within the context of mathematics, stating:

> "Those that have acquired mathematical competence can benefit themselves and others, and society in general, by being selected to learn more and contribute to the higher echelons of society. By the same token, those that have not acquired such competence, rather than being helped to acquire it, shall be deemed unfit as such and encouraged to

see themselves better off elsewhere, or justifiably cast aside in extremis…" (p.67)

There is a strong link evident between the above statement and my discussion of assessment preference and the perceived value of the BTEC in comparison to the A-level qualification (Chapter Five, pages 198-204).

During Chapter Five (page 182) I introduced the concept of 'dispositional cultural assets', meaning any form of cultural capital that may change the disposition(s) of a student in a way that is seen as valuable by employers. Through using a Bourdieusian perspective, qualities such as ambition, independence, flexibility and resilience have capital and therefore can be exchanged during a transaction within a relevant field.

In addition, extending Bourdieu's concepts to include 'emotional capital' (Reay, 2000; Gendron, 2004 and Zembylas, 2007) was helpful in explaining the emotional investment and subsequent emotional response that can occur between agents within an educational field and how this emotional transaction can impact learning motivation (figure 5.1).

In reflection of the brief points noted here, and the detailed discussion in Chapter Five, it can be argued that there is a close linkage between Bourdieu's forms of capital and learning motivation. Increasing learning motivation from a cultural perspective can be facilitated through interventions that support the development of a culture of studiousness within a learning cohort. Bourdieu's capitals provide a conceptual framework that help teachers and learners understand the different values associated with learning thus raising awareness of what is valuable within a specific field and how these valuable assets can be used. Learners may therefore understand the value associated with the various elements of their study programme and associated educational experience, which in turn may lead to an increase in learning motivation and a learner's engagement with their study.

Final reflections on this study

Within Chapter Three I discussed various limitations to my study and the completion of this thesis that I faced from the outset as a researcher. These

limitations included the need to adapt my research methods and methodology, moving from life course to an adapted form of life course due to constraints in regards to access to participants. I have also discussed the potential limitations associated with 'insider research' (Corbin Dwyer and Buckle, 2009) and the associated issues I had to overcome. As these issues did impact this thesis I therefore feel that my final reflections should focus on these.

Whilst I have provided justification, a rationale for, and an explanation of how I overcome the limitations associated with my change of focus in regards to methodological approach, in reflection I would have preferred to have followed life course more closely. I believe that whilst the information I received during the short 15-20 minute interviews was useful, longer more in-depth interviews would have given even greater insight into the learners past life and educational experiences and may have led to a deeper understanding of learning motivation. In addition, I would have preferred to have conducted the study in an organization where I do not work and have influence. Much time and consideration was given to the approach I used and the impact of the researcher manager dilemma. Whilst I anticipated the need for careful consideration of this issue throughout my study, I did not fully understand its importance and the space and time that was needed to be allocated within both the study and resultant thesis. I now have a far better understanding of this issue and feel that the experience has helped develop my researcher skillset.

Within the initial chapters of this thesis I discussed the limitations associated with using a case study approach and provided a rationale and justification for adopting this methodological strategy (Chapter Three, pages 78-86). Now that I have completed this study I feel the need for some summative reflections on this approach within the final paragraphs of this concluding chapter. Through interviewing the multiple vocational BTEC Public Services students who participated in this study I have come to appreciate the complex and multifaceted nature of learning motivation and the need for the collection of rich and detailed information about their past educational experiences in order to enhance my understanding of the subject. I believe that the subject of learning motivation is too broad a scope for a single investigation and therefore feel I

justify the case in study within this thesis being bounded within the context of Vocational Further Education BTEC Public Services learners. I feel that the case study approach, given the constraints of this study, was the best way to become "closer to what it is we are trying to understand" (Huff, 2009, p.182) through exploring a deeper account of fewer participants' experiences as opposed to a superficial understanding of many participants' experiences. It is this richness of detail I gained through the focus of the case study approach that may serve as the catalyst to encourage further research as indicated within the above recommendations. It is not my intention to reinforce my argument for the case study approach (Chapter Three, pages 78-86) here, however, I can now see how the approach I have adopted has similarities to other studies of complex human phenomena. An example within the field of education being 'culture shock' where in-depth individual accounts can help the researcher to better understand the topic being investigated (Bamford, 2008). Lombard's (2014) study of a psychosynthesis approach to culture shock has many similarities with my study. She uses a case study approach, collecting data from nine international student sojourners. Lombard required a narrow and deep approach to data collection in order to gain a detailed understanding of the complex phenomena associated with the exploration of a learners' subpersonalities and emotions. Lombard augments the 'narrow-deep' case study approach through reinforcing the need for "detailed, information-rich narrative data through in-depth active interviews" (p.180). Lombard recognizes the perceived limitations of this approach and states that her work supports the "call for further longitudinal research into culture shock in order to produce a critical and credible mass of findings" (p.196). In addition, Furnham and Bochner's (1986) study of 'culture learning' theory; Furnham's (2004) study into learners' experiences of culture shock; and Tambyah and Chng's (2006) study into 'reverse culture shock' supports the narrow-deep case study approach. Tambyah and Chng's study of fourteen Singaporean sojourners were interviewed about their sojourning experiences, cultural adjustment, and repatriation experiences. The findings, that supported both the notion of a global identity shift and dynamic cultural identities, were complex rich in detail offering further opportunities for future research. They state that the 'readjustment process' for learners returning to their original

cultures varies between individuals. Therefore a longitudinal study may 'better trace the readjustment process' and shifts in identities.

Similar to my study, the exploration of culture shock was best suited to an in-depth investigation with fewer participants as opposed to a shallow investigation of many. Similar to my study, culture shock is a complex social phenomenon that is shaped by one's *habitus* and the fields one interacts with. Similar to my study, investigations into culture shock using a similar approach have brought about the emergence of thematic emotional reactions. This is reinforced through the work of Ward *et al* (2001 cited in Clark and Lovric, 2009) who states a person experiencing 'culture shock' tends to undergo a range of emotions "arranged in the following temporal sequence:

(a) The 'honeymoon phase, initial reactions of euphoria.
(b) The crisis, feelings of inadequacy and anxiety.
(c) The recovery, including crisis resolution.
(d) Adjustment, reflecting enjoyment and functional competence." (p.757)

Following a doctoral programme of study on a part-time basis whilst employed full-time in education has presented its challenges. I now understand the impact of doctoral study on the student from an experiential perspective and beyond the knowledge and research skills gained. I did have high expectations regarding the level of challenge and resultant skill development I would experience as a researcher and these expectations have been met and surpassed. What I did not foresee is the how I would change as a person and manager as a result of this experience. In my attempts to define and state my own researcher positionality I have reflected on my own self in far greater detail than I have previously and with considerably more thought. In some ways I have become more alert to, and critical of, the systems and approaches evident within my *habitus* and the fields I influence/am influenced by. Yet, along with this increased critical perspective I have developed a greater appreciation of and openness to the views, perspectives and approaches of others.

My role as a qualitative researcher has brought about many opportunities and issues that I have had to overcome including the duality of manager/researcher, and the balancing of my hectic professional life with being a PhD student. At

times the light at the end of the tunnel seemed so distant that I may as well have been in a black hole, however, I do feel that I have grown as a manager, student and person in overcoming these challenges.

Endnotes:

1. Whilst there are many well-known models of group development (Lewin, 1947; Fisher 1970 and Tubbs, 1995) Tuckman's 1965 five stage model was deemed the most appropriate within the context of the initial stages/phases of student cohort group development, hence its use within this chapter.

2. The term 'learning difficulty curve' within this thesis refers to a graphical tool used to represent a learner's progress of learning with experience (over time). Within education, teachers can differentiate the difficulty levels of individual learner's work in order to maintain positive progress and learning motivation. If the difficulty curve is too severe, the learner's progress will halt. If the difficulty curve is not challenging enough, the learner will not reach their full potential in a session/on programme, etc.

3. Academy schools are state-funded schools in England which are directly funded by the Department for Education and independent of local authority control. The academy movement is the government drive to support more maintained schools to convert to academy status and for more sponsors to realise new academy provision in an attempt to 'create a truly autonomous school led system owned and run by the people that work in it' (Lord Nash, 2014)

4. The August 2015 common inspection framework is designed to bring together the inspection of different education, skills and early years settings to provide greater coherence across different providers that cater for similar age ranges. It ensures more comparability through inspection when children and learners move from one setting to another and supports greater consistency across the inspection of different remits (Ofsted, 2015).

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Appendices

A. **Information sheet for participants[1]**

B. **Orientation interview guide**

C. **Example interview guide**

D. **Example interview transcript**

E. **9-Step plan**

F. **ESRC Ethical Questions**

G. **Example classroom observation record form**

Notes:

1. Supervisors changed mid-way through the completion of this thesis and following data collection. Thesis was completed under the supervision of Dr Richard Waller and Dr Helen Bovill. In addition, the title and focus of my thesis changed post data collection.

Appendix A

Information Sheet for Participants

Research Title: Motivating Students to Achieve their Full Potential in Vocational Service Sector Programmes within Further Education: Analysing and understanding the policy and practice of 'Value Added' and its impact on learner motivation.

The Project: The purpose of this study is to explore student motivation within the FE (further education) vocational sector with specific emphasis on why students may or may not achieve their full potential. The information gathered can then be used to develop appropriate strategies to improve learning motivation within vocational programmes at college.

Thank you for agreeing to contribute to this project. The information you give will be invaluable in improving teaching and learning at college. This study is being carried out as part of a PhD research project under the supervision of the School of Education, University of the West of England (UWE).

The Data Collection Process: It is my intention to investigate student motivation within the FE vocational sector through semi-structured interviews with ten public services students from a single BTEC National Diploma cohort. The data collected from these interviews will be analysed in order to understand learner motivation from the learners' perspective. This in turn will help the development of the aforementioned learning motivation strategies.

The outcomes of this study will heavily depend on what you and your peers discuss during the interview sessions. I want you to be able to speak openly about your experiences, and will ensure that, as far as humanly possible, the identity of all those involved will be protected. I will not name individuals in any form of publication. I also fully accept that people have a right to withdraw from the study at any time with no questions asked.

The design of this project has been considered by the UWE School of Education Ethics committee and has been formally approved. I will be the sole researcher for this project (directly supervised by Professor Ann-Marie Bathmaker and Professor David James of UWE). I have full membership with the IfL (Institute for Learning - FE professional body) and hold 'enhanced disclosure' clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau.

Please feel free to contact either of the aforementioned supervisors if you have a query relating to any aspect of this project (Ann-Marie.Bathmaker@uwe.ac.uk ; David.James@uwe.ac.uk). In the unlikely event that you have a concern over the conduct of the data collection process (interviews), you can contact the Chair of the Faculty Research Ethics Sub-Committee instead – i.e. Professor Saville Kushner, School of Education, UWE, Frenchay Campus, BRISTOL BS16 1QY. (Email – Saville.Kushner@uwe.ac.uk)
Thank you again for agreeing to take part in this project, your contribution is much appreciated and highly valued.

Darran George

Darran.George@uwe.ac.uk

Appendix B

Orientation Interview Guide

'Explain to me your life up until this point'

In support of the key statement the following can help guide the discussion.

Personal background

- ➢ Personal details – (includes ethnicity/parental status/1st language etc)

- ➢ Where did you grow up?

- ➢ How long have you lived at your current address?

- ➢ Which school(s) did you previously attend? Explain your educational journey from nursery/Infant school up to this point.

- ➢ Was your education disrupted in any way whilst at secondary school? E.g. moving house etc.

- ➢ Do you have (or ever had) any learning difficulties?

- ➢ Did you receive support for your learning whilst at school and has this support continued whilst at college?

- ➢ What are the most memorable moments of your life to date?

- ➢ Who do you think are the key persons that have shaped your life to date and why?

Appendix C

Interview Guide (Interview 1 – 'Motivations')

Guidance Categories

- ➢ The meaning of education to the participant.

- ➢ Influences on enrolment to the Public Services programme.

- ➢ The college experience.

- ➢ The social experience.

- ➢ Thoughts and feelings on their ability.

- ➢ Personal goals/ambitions (5yr/10yr/lifetime).

- ➢ What motivates them to strive for excellence? Do they? Why (not)? Rank of importance for motivators eg. Money, kudos, please significant others, career ambitions, lifestyle etc.

- ➢ What are the barriers?

Guidance Questions

The meaning of education to the participant.

- ➢ How important is education to you?

- ➢ Did you achieve your full potential at school? Why (not)?

- ➢ Did you enjoy school, do you enjoy college?

- ➢ What in your opinions are the differences between school and college?

- ➢ How valuable do you feel the BTEC National Diploma Public Services is?

- ➢ Why do you feel completing a L3 programme will benefit you?

- ➢ Is education the only way to achieve your career goals?

- ➢ Why study?

- ➢ How would you like to see education changed in the future?

Influences on enrolment to the BTEC Public Services programme.

➢ Why have you chosen to study a BTEC programme rather than A-levels?

➢ Why have you chosen to study the NDPUS course?

➢ What are your career ambitions?

➢ Did you have any support from parents or others?

➢ Who was your idol or role model throughout school/college?

➢ Did you experience any barriers when initially applying for the course?

➢ How easy is it to get a place on a college programme?

➢ Is there any particular reason why the public services are so appealing to you?

The College Experience

➢ Can you describe your first day/week at college– your thoughts and feelings?

➢ How did you feel when you were given your first assignment task?

➢ Did you enjoy the initial coursework tasks?

➢ How did you feel on receipt of your first assessment grade?

➢ Did this grade have an impact on your motivation?

➢ What are your favourite sessions?

➢ Why are these your favourite sessions?

➢ Are these your favourites because you find the assessments easier? Why do you feel you find these assessments easier?

➢ Do you value the rules and regulations set out by the college regarding coursework hand in and re-assessment?

➢ How could this be improved?

The Social Experience

- ➢ Does college affect your social life in any way?

- ➢ Are there any opportunities to meet new friends when starting a new college course such as NDPUS?

- ➢ Do you have any close friends as a result of joining the BTEC programme?

- ➢ Are you currently in a relationship?

- ➢ If so, what does your partner think about your college course?

- ➢ Does your partner encourage and support your study?

- ➢ How do you think students are by the general population?

- ➢ Do your college friends have an impact on your study?

- ➢ Is there sometimes conflict between study and social life?

- ➢ Which do you value the most study or socialising?

Thoughts and feelings on their ability

- ➢ Have you ever achieved better than you anticipated?

- ➢ How does achieving good grades make you feel?

- ➢ Why is achievement important (not important)?

- ➢ How do you feel you are perceived by your friends?

- ➢ How do you feel about your ability?

- ➢ What are the best grades you have achieved?

- ➢ What are the worst grades you have achieved?

- ➢ What would you change about past study opportunities if given the chance?

- ➢ Under perfect circumstances do you believe you have the ability to achieve excellence (top grades)?

Personal goals/ambitions (5yr/10yr/lifetime).

 ➢ What do you feel about your current achievement levels?

 ➢ Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

 ➢ Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

 ➢ Where do you see yourself in 20 years?

What motivates them to strive for excellence? Do they? Why (not)? Rank of importance for motivators e.g. Money, kudos, please significant others, career ambitions, lifestyle etc.

 ➢ What is the single biggest motivating factor for you to strive for good grades?

 ➢ What other factors would help motivate you to strive for higher grades?

 ➢ Do you value the lecturers' opinions when discussing industry?

 ➢ Do you find it difficult to relate classroom discussion to the real world?

 ➢ Does this impact your motivation to achieve higher grades?

 ➢ Which opinion would you value more – the lecturer of the employer?

 ➢ If you achieve a good grade in your first assignments would you want to continue this trend?

 ➢ If you scored low on your initial assignments would you still look to achieve high in the following assignments?

 ➢ Can you define motivation?

 ➢ Do you tend to put a lot of effort into some things in life yet not others?

 ➢ Why do you put more effort into these areas?

What are the barriers?

 ➢ What do you feel are the barriers to getting higher grades?

➢ What do you feel are the barriers to becoming motivated to achieve high

grades?

➢ How do you feel you can overcome these barriers?

Appendix D

Interview Transcript (Orientation, 04.10.2011, 11.03)

Attendees: Darran George (DG) ▮

DG   Explain to me your life up until this point? Please include as much detail as possible.

▮   Well I was born ▮▮▮▮. Then went ▮ Primary School that was my first one then went to priory and while at priory was trying to think about what I wanted to do for the rest of my life and had a few ideas in the area ▮▮ and that and started to take GCSEs though as I was taking them I decided I wasn't really into ▮▮ and that type of thing so wanted to make the most of thongs, make the most of my life. I like helping people and that and decided to look at a career in the public services, like police and fire service and the police appealed most to me so I decided to follow that career.

DG   So why did the Police appeal to you so much?

▮   I don't know I just like the idea of stopping people doing bad things and stuff and just wanted to make a difference

DG   So is that one of the motivations for you wanting to start this programme?

▮   Yeah it is yeah the main one

DG   So what do you think of this programme in terms of it preparing you...

▮   Well so far is does it very well because I do command and control which is all about the police and that and we also do leadership which is really important as well isn't it

DG   So did you ever have a point where you thought A-levels would be more suited?

▮   I ▮▮▮▮▮▮ and that.

DG   So in terms of your personal details can you tell me a little bit about your background, family etcetera?

▮   I got a mum and dad who lives at home, I ▮▮▮▮▮▮

DG   Tell me more about ▮

▮   It is a normal size school with 2 classes for each year.

DG   What were the best experiences that you had from ▮

■ Well I quite liked the sports day because I ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉ ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉

DG Ok so you enjoy your fitness, is that one of the reasons you wanted to join a service such as the police?

■ Yeah I suppose yeah cos I like a more active er, I prefer to be active than stuck in front of a screen all day.

DG So tell me more about ■ School, what are the most memorable experiences of ■

■ Well there are loads, I did volley ball ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉ ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉ and I took quite a lot of GCSEs as well, I ▉▉▉▉▉ ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉ Most were took at the same time as everyone else though English I took in Year 9 and Science I began in year 9. Because I finished English early (half way through year 10) I took an additional media GCSE, I got a B grade in both.

DG Did that method of early study suit you?

■ Yes I think it did yeah cos [sic] it gave me the chance to do another GCSE as well and I did alright in them so…

DG Were you more motivated by the prospect of early achievement or do you think it would have been better to have more time to get the best possible grade?

■ Well I thought at first that I didn't want to do it as I thought I would like the extra time, but then the teach like told us we were ahead and that we were capable of it, and it kinda [sic] boosted my confidence with it and we went through it and got pretty good results so…

DG So the conversation you had with you teacher was very important in helping you make the decision and also in terms of your motivation?

■ Yes ▉▉▉▉ She had a parents evening and brought our parents in to discuss how we could do it.

DG You said you started to think of a ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉ and then shift to public services. What was the main reason for this?

■ While at ■ we had lots of discussions with like a career manager and she talks to every student privately and whilst talking to her she asked what you kinda [sic] like then after talking to her for a while she saw that I wasn't like so much into the media and that I could do other things and that's when I started looking at other options I was quite good at media I got a B grade which was one of the reasons that I decided to look at a media career. And I enjoyed English and there was a part of English that taught us about advertising and I quite liked that and that's when I thought oh there's an entire subject about it, so then I thought I'll go into that. My success in the subject played a role in what I thought I wanted to do next.

DG   Describe the series of events in order that led you to change career paths to Public Services

█   We had a careers event at the ███████████ I went and talked to some of the people, and cos my careers manager recommended the public services kinda [sic] thing I went and talked to the police down there, I think it was ████ Constabulary, I had a little talk to them and they told me how to get in, all about the job, and then it started to appeal to me more and more. It sounded very exciting and I thought that was the job for me.

DG   Returning to your education were there any disruptions to your time in education (school) up until this point?

█   No not really, I didn't really have any time off.

DG   Do you have any learning difficulties that you are aware of have you ever had any support for your learning?

█   No not really though when I was really young in reception class ██████ ████████████████████████████████████ ███████████████████████ I kinda grew out of it. I don't think it had an impact on my education though had to have a number of extra sessions.

DG   What do you feel are the most memorable moments in your life?

█   One of the most memorable experiences was when I was ████████ ███ ███ ███ █████████████████████████████████

DG   What to you was the most significant aspect of that experience?

█   Probably my friend getting his ██████████████████████ ███ ███ █████████████████████████

DG   Ok if you had to describe to me the best teacher you have ever had in education who would it be and why?

█   There were two, there's this one guy who ████████████ came to ██████ half way through and he is a new teacher and no one really knew him so like after a while he got in everyone's good books and he's a really funny guy you could have a joke with him. But when it came down to learning he always talked straight. His sessions were relaxed and friendly but we always go a lot from them, got a lot of work done and learned stuff. Other teachers didn't do this but he like made an effort to get to know you. He would like know your brothers and sisters around the school and

would like joke with you and stuff. I thought that was quite important because I got a good friendship going like and I tend to respect him more and listen to him more. He would like, if someone was misbehaving would ███ and like joke about it and it would kinda work.

█ Another teacher was Mr █ my critical thinking teacher, he came in half way through the year as well. He quickly got us into his good books, he done some impressions in class, which were funny and I think he won teacher of the year award. He was a new teacher and everyone loved him you know. He knew when to joke, when everyone was in that kinda mood and knew when to get serious and like get on with the work.

DG   What do you think is the meaning of education?

█ I think a big part of it is preparing you for later on in life, so you get a job and you know your stuff. Um, I also think it teaches you to know how to act, like politeness and manners and stuff like that. It teaches us obedience.

DG   What has your college experience been like so far?

█ It has been really good so far. I like all the academies you can get involved with. It was our second session and my tutor █ told us about all the academies and they are all free so I enrolled in a few of them. I also like meeting new people and I have met lots of new people on the course. I like the social aspect of things.

DG   What are the 3 most important things you would want to get from college?

█ I definitely want to get the experience from doing stuff. Not just learning but doing it as well. I definitely want to get more confidence from doing things, like all these new activities and stuff, so when I go into the world of work I will be much better suited. I guess I want to get to know people a lot more, get to understand people and stuff like that.

█ The social experience has been good so far, I like the areas around the college like the cafeteria down the bottom and like that you can sit down with people and that.

DG   What do you feel are the differences between school and college?

█ It's hard to get used to calling them by their first name and I keep like calling them Mr or something by accident but once you get used to it its quite good. It's like everyone is equal in the room and everyone respects everyone there so yeah.

DG   What are your thoughts and feelings on your ability to do well on the course?

■   I think I should do ok. I have the highest challenge grades set from tutorial cos [sic] I had good GCSEs. My target is DDD (Distinction) and I should be able to get that.

DG   Finally, what is your five year plan?

■   Ok five year, I would like to get into the police, though I know you can't go straight in these days so after college I will probably see about getting a PT job, a better one than I have now but also see about getting a volunteer job because the Police recognize volunteer work and like it a lot. Then three or four years in I will start applying for the training for the Police. If I get that it will probably take me up to the five-year mark.

DG   Thank you [finished with closing comments]

Appendix E

9-Step Plan

Step 1 – Refining of study (post approval) and completion of 1st draft of Chapter 1 (Introduction to study). Step 1 was planned for completion by Sept 2010. Further changes and amendments undertaken resulted in revised completion date of March 2011.

Step 2 - Preparing for data collection, refining of methods/methodology. Step 2 was completed by September 2010. However, methods/methodology refinement continued throughout the research process.

Step 3 – complete initial draft of Chapter 2 (Literature Review). Completion of Step 3 was planned for September 2011. This target was achieved in part. The research process followed resulted in continuous refinement and revision of the literature review throughout the study. This flexible and continuous approach helped maintain research currency and allow the research to be able to adapt to emerging themes.

Step 4 – Data collection. For a timeline outlining the data collection process see table 3.3 (appendices). Step 4 - Conduct 3 strand data collection process, (follow cohort (ED3PUPF1/2KN Red) through academic years 1 and 2) was completed by June 2012.

Step 5 – Completion of Chapter 3 (Methodology and Research Approach). Step 5 – Methods Chapter 1st draft was completed by February 2012.

Step 6 – Data analysis and completion of Chapter 4 (Findings). Step 6 – was completed throughout August 2012.

Step 7 - Analysing and interpreting findings and completion of Chapter 5 (Analysis, Interpretation, and Synthesis of Findings). Step 7 (analysis, interpretation and synthesis of findings 1st draft) followed step 6 and was completed throughout September 2012 to August 2013

Step 8 – Drafting and redrafting of each chapter (1-5). Step 8 – The redrafting process, was completed throughout September 2013 – August 2014).

Step 9 – Completion of Chapter 6 (Conclusions and Recommendations) and final considerations for dissertation manuscript. Step 9 (final chapter and considerations) was completed with final thesis submitted September 2014.

Appendix F

Research Ethics: Ethical Questions

The following ethical questions were considered prior to starting the data collection process and before implementing any of the research methods used within this study. The ethical questions are adopted from the Research Ethics Guidebook (ESRC, 2010).

The following categories and questions are direct extracts from:

ESRC (2010) The Research Ethics Guidebook [WWW]
http://www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk
Accessed on 05.09.2010

Integrity and Quality

Are the research questions worth asking, so that the use of researchers' and participants' time, the funding and opportunities is valid?

Which groups are the research findings intended to benefit? Have any members of those groups advised on the design and conduct of the research?

How will integrity and quality be ensured in the process of review?

Do you have the necessary skills?

Are you prepared and competent to deal with unexpected things that could arise during the course of your work?

Are there any checks or support frameworks that you can draw on to ensure integrity and quality in your research practice?

Fully Informed Participants

Is it likely to be a sensitive topic for your participants? How will you know?

If the topic is sensitive, how will you introduce it to the research participants?

Are your participants fully aware of the topic and focus of the research?

What will you tell participants and research staff about your own views on the subject you are researching?

Are you truly open-minded about what you might find, or do you have a directional hypothesis?

Are you going to be able to explain the research project to your subjects?

Do you have an existing relationship or position of authority over the research subjects that will make it difficult to talk with them?

Do you have the language skills necessary to talk to your participants?

Does everyone on the research team understand the project and its aims?

Do you have a pre-existing view on the topic of the research that should be explained to the people taking part in it?

Are the researchers really in a position to identify the risks involved in the research, and explain them to the participants? What do you need to do to make sure of that?

How are you going to explain the method to your subjects? Can you do it in a way that they will understand?

If it's an experimental method, how will you explain to the participants how they were selected, and why they are in the group they are in?

If you are doing secondary data analysis, did the consent gained to collect the primary data cover the sort of additional analysis you are now doing?

How will you make sure that potential participants understand what you are planning to do with the information you are collecting?

What if you are not planning to fully inform participants about your methods? Are you sure you can justify that to an ethics committee?

Is there something particular about your methods that means it is impossible to get fully informed consent?

How are you going to recruit participants and tell them about the project without making them feel pressured to take part?

How are you informing participants about what you are doing? What do you think they might want or need to know?

Can they understand the information you are giving them?

Is there anything that you are not telling them? If so, are you confident you can justify that to an ethics committee? Remember that variations to the principle of fully informed consent are only allowed in very specific and exceptional circumstances.

Do participants know and understand the limits of confidentiality in your work? For example, you have a duty of care if you have concerns that someone may be at risk of harm - particularly if that person is a child. Equally, in professional interviews, confidentiality could be compromised if participants are well-known, or are known to each other.

Could giving participants information about how the project may cause them problems or put them at risk in any way? For example, if participants are part of a stigmatised group, they may not want people to know they are involved in research on your topic.

If you plan to access participants through a service or organisation (e.g. children in a school, or workers in a factory) do you have a contact in the organisation who will check private lists of contacts for you and send out your invitations?

Do you need to train them, or give them information, so they know how to deal with enquiries about your research?

Is the location where you will talk to participants good for communicating in?

Is there anything about the setting that might affect how easily participants can understand your request? Will there be distractions? Will it be quiet enough?

Are you working in a setting where capacity to consent might be impaired? For example, are you conducting research in a pub or club where participants might be intoxicated?

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Is your topic such that a breach of anonymity would have particularly severe consequences for your research subjects?

How will you ensure that potential participants are not identified or stigmatised as a result of being invited to take part in your research? For example, a study of young people and alcohol use might cause problems for young people if their parents found an information sheet that gave details about the study.

Has everyone involved in the study been trained or briefed about confidentiality and anonymity?

Do you have a standard protocol that is used by everyone concerned?

If you are working with colleagues who are based remotely - whether in another country or in a different organisation - how will you make sure that they are following agreed protocols?

Have any sub-contracted staff - such as transcribers or data entry staff - signed confidentiality agreements?

If researchers are practitioners, could their knowledge of what an individual has said affect the way they work with that person, or anyone else?

For example, imagine a manager in an institution is studying for an MBA, and as part of that she does a confidential survey of staff. It asks, among other questions, if staff have any criticisms of their workplace. Can they respond honestly without fear of negative consequences (e.g. for future promotion prospects)?

If you are using focus groups how are you going to ensure confidentiality of what is said?

Have you established ground rules and protocols for participants about confidentiality and respect? Can you guarantee that participants will stick to these agreements? Do you need to think about the sensitivity of what is being discussed, just in case?

If your research involves data storage, sharing or transfer, have you made arrangements to ensure that this is done securely and that identifiable data is appropriately secured or encrypted?

If your research involves data archiving, how will you ensure data are adequately anonymised?

If you are analysing data, how are you keeping the data secure while you are conducting the analysis?

How far is it possible to keep information given confidential or to ensure participants are anonymised?

Is there a risk of participants being identified from the anonymised data?

If you are interviewing people, can you be overheard? Could you cause offence, upset or embarrassment? Are you asking anything that they might not want to be overheard?

How far can you anonymise your setting?

Are there challenges to confidentiality that arise from what you have to agree with gatekeepers at the site?

How will you manage data security when you are at the research site (or travelling to or from the site)?

You may assure participants that data will be stored securely, separately from personally identifying details, but how can you achieve that when you are out on fieldwork?

Voluntary Participation, Free from Coercion

Does everyone who is involved in the study understand what you mean by *voluntary participation, free from coercion?* What about:

Gatekeepers who may be asking participants if you can contact them?

Interpreters, who may be explaining the research for you and seeking consent?

Participants - if you are using participant (peer) recruitment or snowball sampling strategies?

Research staff who are collecting data or seeking consent on your behalf?

Could any of your recruitment processes encourage people to put pressure on participants to agree to take part?

Have you trained or supported those people involved in recruitment to make sure they understand the voluntary and non-coercive nature of participation? How?

If you plan to send reminders in order to involve more participants, how will you avoid seeming to put pressure on them to volunteer?

If you are planning to observe people, can you ensure that they have a choice about whether to be observed?

If your participants are nominated by a gatekeeper, do you get active voluntary consent from the participants themselves, or are you assuming their agreement because the gatekeeper has agreed? Remember that the gatekeeper cannot consent on behalf of someone else, they can only give you permission to seek consent from the participant.

Once participants know the details of the project, do your methods allow time for them i) to think about the details, ii) to ask questions or discuss uncertainties, iii) to make a decision, iv) to signify their decision (e.g., by signing a consent form that is separate from their information leaflet)?

If the research is designed to change and develop, or to continue over time, how will consent be renegotiated at each stage?

Can participants opt in to the research, or is the access more pressured so that they have to opt out if they wish to refuse?

Do the subjects of your research know they are being studied? If they do not, their participation is not voluntary.

Are your participants able to decline to participate in the setting where they are?

Are you working a setting where participants might not usually be able to say no when asked to do something? For example, schools, workplaces and prisons - whilst all quite different - are all settings in which people are accustomed to following instructions from senior figures.

If the setting is a workplace, do people understand that taking part in your research is not part of their job?

If the setting is a school (or other educational setting), do the students understand that your research is voluntary, and not a lesson or exercise that they are required to do?

Is there a nearby authority figure who might be telling them to take part?

Have any authority figures been adequately briefed about the voluntary nature of participation, so that they don't inadvertently put pressure on potential participants?

Do gatekeepers understand that they have only given permission for you to seek consent, that they cannot consent on behalf of someone else?

Could they feel pressured by peers to agree to the research, even if they don't want to take part?

Will you be clear that no one has to give an explanation of why they choose not to participate?

Will you provide an alternative activity, so people who decline within a group have something else to do?

Avoiding Harm

How would participants feel about the way your research is reported or used?

How do you plan to avoid harm to individuals, groups, 'their wider family, kin and community', their 'organisations and businesses' - as a direct result of research or reports, or because of the risk of reports being misconstrued and misused?

Does the research balance positive along with negative themes in the questions, analysis and reporting, in abstracts of journal papers, press releases, conference lectures and mass media interviews?

Have you thought about how to avoid or reduce potential harms that could result from your methods?

How might participants react if they feel harmed?

In social science research, harm may not be physical. Could they feel anxious, embarrassed, distressed, misunderstood, judged - or misjudged, or misreported? How might they react? How would you respond? Do you have anyone you can discuss such problems with, to help you to deal with them?

Has Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearance been obtained for any researchers who will be in contact with children or vulnerable adults?

Do all researchers know what to do if someone gets upset?

What if a participant reveals something that is a cause for concern? Do you have protocols in place to deal with disclosures?

Is the place where you are conducting the research safe for participants and researchers?

If researchers or participants have to travel to the research setting, will they be safe from risk of harm whilst travelling?

Does your institutional insurance provide appropriate cover for the work you plan to do?

Could there be an appearance of impropriety from meeting your research participant at a given location? Is there any stigma attached to the setting (e.g. a clinic)? Or any cultural sensitivity that you should take into account?

Could you distress or inconvenience participants by your choice of setting? Will you recoup their financial costs - e.g. for travel, time off work, or childcare?

Does your research setting mean that you have to use translators who may not be appropriately sensitive to the research topic?

Does the research setting mean it is more dangerous to discuss certain topics?

Does the research setting mean that you have to take into account any particular sensitivities or risks?

Are there cultural norms that you need to respect? Could you cause upset or distress by, for example, the way you dress or the way you approach potential participants in the setting?

Could the setting have implications for the harm that could result from disseminating or reporting your research? For example, if your research is set in a particular country, could the findings cause embarrassment for the government of that country? That may be justified (for example, in the public interest) but are you equipped to deal with the consequences?

Independence and impartiality of the Researcher

Is there any vested interest or relationship between the researcher and the setting that might affect the independence and impartiality of the researcher?

All categories and questions were direct extracts from:

ESRC (2010) The Research Ethics Guidebook [WWW]
http://www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk
Accessed on 05.09.2010

Appendix G

CLASS OBSERVATION RECORD FORM

Name of Cohort: Extended Diploma Public Services Year 1 (Red Group)	Faculty: Service Sectors Division: Public Services ( )	Name of Tutor:
Name of Observer: Darran George	Date and Time of Observation: 12/11/10 3.30-4 *Start of session (first 30 mins)*	Location of Observation:
Employment Status of Teacher *FT Establishment Staff*	Age of Cohort: *16-18 / 19+ (refer to group context statement)*	Level: L3
Lesson Title: Major Incidents	Subject Sector Classification: 1	Attendance: No Attending / On register: 20/21 Percentage 95%

Observations:

Student			Teacher		
Activity (what doing?) Recorded at 5 min intervals	**On task? Yes/No – Number? Engaged in session? Yes/No – Num?**	**Interaction with Tutor**	**Activity (what doing?) Recorded at 5 min intervals**	**Delivery style, method and approach**	**Interaction with Student**
Start/Intro					
+5 'brain warmer' task from board	Task yes 20 Engaged yes 18 no 2 though 2 learners discussing non task topic.	None observed	+5 completing register	n/a	Observing whilst completing register.
+5 Listening to lecturer introducing session and making notes	Task yes 20 Engaged yes 20	Listening	+5 Introducing session aims and objectives	Front and centre of room facing learners Lecture style	One way tutor led Speaking at and observing behaviour
+5 listening Answering questions Taking notes	Task yes 20 Engaged yes 20	Observing tutor Listening Answering questions when prompted	+5 Explaining 'levels of command'	Front and centre of room facing learners Lecture style	Two way (Q&A) tutor led Speaking at and observing behaviour Asking questions
+5 listening Answering questions Taking notes Asking questions	Task yes 20 Engaged yes 19 no 1 1 learner appears distracted by activity outside of the classroom	Observing tutor Listening Answering questions when prompted Asking questions	+5 Explaining 'levels of command'	Front and centre of room facing learners Lecture style	Two way (Q&A) tutor led Speaking at and observing behaviour Asking questions
+5 listening Answering questions Taking notes Asking questions	Task yes 17 no 3 Engaged yes 17 no 3 3 learners discussing topic off task and not engaged in session	Observing tutor, Listening Answering questions when prompted Asking questions	+5 Explaining 'levels of command' Had to challenge behaviour	Front and centre of room facing learners Lecture style	Two way (Q&A) tutor led Speaking at and observing behaviour Asking questions
+5 listening Answering questions Taking notes Asking questions	Task yes 20 Engaged yes 20	Observing tutor, Listening Answering questions when prompted Asking questions	+5 Explaining 'levels of command'	Front and centre of room facing learners Lecture style	Two way (Q&A) tutor led Speaking at and observing behaviour Asking questions

Darran George
PhD Education

Notes:

General
On arriving to session and prior to starting the 'brain warmer' activity learners were generally discussing social activities, e.g. a tackle made in a rugby fixture. Tutor had to challenge student behaviour (25 mins into session). Students appeared engaged at the start of the session (whilst completing off topic task – brain warmer). Students appear to be less engaged as session time increased. Use of humour by teacher engages learners – enjoyable learning environment.

Learning materials, resources, ranges of activities and session structure and checks on learning / questioning technique
PowerPoint SMART Board. Tutor led discussion and Q&A (lower order questioning).

Learners Comments (general feedback from post lesson Focus Group)		
Q: Aspects of the session you found most motivating? 'Activity at the start' – brain warmer activity, self-directed and exploratory. '█ – good lecturer – funny' – learners were engaged by the teachers use of humour.	Q: Aspects of the session you found least motivating? 'Discussion – went on too long' – learners like variety to their lessons. 'Repetitive' 'had lots of lectures today' 'we haven't had any practical [sessions] for ages'– learners like variety to their programme of study.	Comments relating to learner/learning motivation 'difficult to stay motivated on Friday' 'tired was working last night until 12.00' '█ [teacher] helps motivate us and makes session better by telling jokes' - funny

1